PRESENT TENDENCIES IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

ALBERT C. KNUDSON

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THESE lectures, delivered under the Mendenhall Foundation of De Pauw University in 1924, are partly historical and partly critical. They aim to give a general survey of the modern thought world in its relation to religion and to show how Christianity has been and is adjusting itself to its new environment. The field is a broad one, and the treatment necessarily general. Chief attention is devoted to what may be called the crucial question of our day, the question of the truth of religion. Can Christianity, after renouncing its claim to an objective and infallible authority, maintain its verity in our scientific age? In answering this question both friend and foe have appealed to experience, reason, and utility as the ultimate tests of truth. The nature and cogency of these appeals form the main subject of inquiry in the present volume.

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THE BEACON LIGHTS OF PROPHECY

THE PROPHETIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL

THE RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Present Tendencies
IN
Religious Thought

BY

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FOREWORD

THE Mendenhall Lectures of DePauw University, to which this series of addresses belongs, was founded by the Reverend Marmaduke H. Mendenhall, D.D., of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The object of the donor was to found a perpetual lectureship which would bring to the University as lecturers "persons of high and wide repute, of broad and varied scholarship, who firmly adhere to the evangelical system of Christian faith. The selection of lecturers may be made from the world of Christian scholarship, without regard to denominational divisions. Each course of lectures is to be published in book form by an eminent publishing house and sold at cost to the faculty and students of the university."

Lectures thus far published under this foundation:

1913, *The Bible and Life,* Edwin Holt Hughes.

1914, *The Literary Primacy of the Bible,* George Peck Eckman.

1917, *Understanding the Scriptures,* Francis John McConnell.

1918, *Religion and War,* William Herbert Perry Faunce.

1919, *Some Aspects of International Christianity,* John Kelman.

1920, *What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?* Ernest Fremont Tittle.

1921, *Social Rebuilders,* Charles Reynolds Brown.

1922, *This Mind,* William Fraser McDowell.

1924, *Present Tendencies in Religious Thought,* Albert C. Knudson.

GEORGE R. GROSE,
President DePauw University.

PREFACE

THESE lectures are partly historical and partly critical. They aim to give a general survey of the modern thought world in its relation to religion and to show how Christianity has been and is adjusting itself to its new environment. The field is a broad one, and the treatment necessarily general. Chief attention is devoted to what may be called the crucial question of our day, the question of the truth of religion. Can Christianity, after renouncing its claim to an objective and infallible authority, maintain its verity in our scientific age? In answering this question both friend and foe have appealed to experience, reason, and utility as the ultimate tests of truth. The nature and cogency of these appeals form the main subject of inquiry in the present volume. No attempt at systematic completeness has been made, but the more important tendencies in religious thought along the line indicated are expounded and discussed.

I wish to express my thanks to President George R. Grose for the privilege of delivering these lectures on the Mendenhall Foundation. As here presented they differ considerably from the

form in which they were delivered. They are about twice as long, and have for the most part the character of studies rather than addresses.

My friends and colleagues, Dr. Edgar S. Brightman and Mr. Earl Marlatt, have kindly read the manuscript and given me the benefit of their highly valued judgment on many points having to do both with style and content. For this service I am deeply indebted to them and desire here to express my appreciation and gratitude.

Subsequent to their delivery on the Mendenhall Foundation, these lectures, with President Grose's kind permission, were also given before the faculty and students of Gammon Theological Seminary; and it is my hope that in their printed form they may serve a useful purpose among the friends of that important institution as well as among those of De Pauw University.

The literature in the field I have covered is vast. From a number of representative works I have quoted briefly, and for permission to do so I wish to thank the various publishers. A detailed acknowledgment of my obligations in this respect will be found at the end of the book.

ALBERT C. KNUDSON.

CHAPTER I

THE MODERN THOUGHT WORLD

It is customary, in analyzing the modern thought world, to reduce its characteristic elements to two outstanding and significant movements: science and democracy.

The scientific movement is not peculiar to the modern age. It had its place in ancient Greece. Aristotle and many others emphasized the importance of the empirical method. But with them it led to no such extraordinary discoveries and inventions as it has in the modern world. It did not become a popular movement. It did not captivate the imagination of the people. It did not become a cult. To-day with many it is a religion. "My religion," said Renan, "is now as ever the progress of reason; in other words, the progress of science." Magic, religion, and science, according to Sir James Frazer, represent three successive stages in the development of the human spirit. As religion in the past displaced magic, so science to-day is displacing religion. More and more, we are told, men are actually, whatever may be their professions, placing their

hope, not in God, but in science. It is the solid achievements of science rather than the unsubstantial dreams of religion that now form the real ground of human confidence and the real stimulus to human endeavor. In any case it is the empirical method of natural science that is to-day the accepted standard by which all truth is to be tested. The age of metaphysics belongs to the past. Empirical science is now dominant. Its sway, whether we like it or not, is at present generally recognized in the field of theoretical knowledge. And there can be no doubt, as C. A. Ellwood says, that science has been "the main element disturbing the habits, standards, and beliefs of the past in the modern world."[1]

What science thus is to the theoretical reason of the modern man, that, it is said, is democracy to his practical reason. It is the norm and guiding star in the work of political and social reconstruction. The democratic movement, like the scientific, is not, it is true, wholly modern. It has its roots in the ancient past. But it has in modern times received such extraordinary accretions of strength, and has become to such a large extent a popular faith that it may properly be regarded as characteristically modern. Like science democracy, too, has become a cult.

Fifty to a hundred and fifty years ago it was

[1] *The Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 11.

chiefly political democracy that awakened the ardent hopes of the Western world. "To Mazzini and his disciples," says Bryce, "as to Jefferson and many another fifty years before, Democracy was a Religion, or the natural companion of a religion, or a substitute for religion, from which effects on morals and life were hoped similar to those which the preachers of new creeds have so often seen with the eyes of faith."[2] Mazzini, for instance, said: "This yearning of the human mind toward an indefinite progress, this force that urges the generations onward toward the future; this impulse of universal association; the banner of young Europe waving on every side; this varied, multiform, endless warfare everywhere going on against tyranny; this cry of the nations arising from the dust to reclaim their rights, and call their rulers to account for the injustice and oppression of the ages; this crumbling of ancient dynasties at the breath of the people; this anathema upon old creeds, this restless search after new; this youthful Europe springing from the old, like the moth from the chrysalis; this glowing life arising in the midst of death; this world in resurrection—is this not poetry?" In such an utterance as this we manifestly have all the glow of a religious faith. But powerful as this early faith in political democ-

[2] *Modern Democracies*, ii, p. 533.

racy was, it gradually lost its hold on the minds of men. As Hobhouse says, "the golden radiance of its morning hopes has long since faded into the light of common day."

This does not mean, however, that the general idea of democracy has lost its power of appeal to the modern mind. "Democracy" is as much as ever a term to conjure with. To "make the world safe for democracy" was the battle cry of only a few years ago. But what is awakening popular enthusiasm to-day is not political democracy; it is industrial or social democracy. Political democracy, it is claimed, has failed. It has not brought the nations of the world into more friendly relations with each other; it has not welded together the different strata of human society and created between them a mutual feeling of fellowship and good will; it has not satisfied the yearnings of men for a better social order; it has not purified politics nor removed it from the sinister influences of the Money Power. Indeed, political democracy has become simply the tool of wealth. The capitalistic class still rules in the councils of state. And this, it is held, will necessarily continue to be the case until wealth itself is democratized. The hope of the world, therefore, lies in such a reconstruction of the industrial and social order as will put economic power as well as abstract political rights

into the hands of the people. Only in this way, we are told, can government become truly democratic. Political democracy, if it is to be real, must be based on industrial democracy. The latter has, consequently, become the watchword of social reform and of socialism. To it the social hope is now pinning its faith; and this hope with multitudes has become a religion. It has displaced the political liberalism of fifty to a hundred and fifty years ago and is to-day the gospel of the proletariat.

The democratic movement has thus undergone a marked change during the past fifty years; but faith in the essential principle of democracy still persists. For democracy, it is felt, is deeper than any particular expression of it. It is a spirit, an interest, an ideal. But what is this interest or ideal? Is it simple and definite? Or is it complex and variable? The latter would seem to be the case. At any rate the word "democracy" has various meanings, and in the interest of clear thinking these should be distinguished. We have, to begin with, several different forms of democracy. In addition to political and industrial democracy we have religious democracy and democracy in personal and social relations. But these different forms are due simply to the different fields in which the democratic principle is applied. They do not necessarily imply dif-

ferent conceptions of the democratic principle itself, though they naturally carry with them different emphases. In democracy of a personal and social character stress is properly laid on the idea of "fraternity"; in religious and political democracy the emphasis by way of reaction against various forms of tyranny falls almost inevitably on the idea of "liberty"; and in industrial democracy, concerned as it is with economic problems, interest naturally gravitates toward the idea of "equality." These different emphases, however, are only incidental to the general idea of democracy. It is with the latter that we are concerned.

The term "democracy" is used in at least three different senses, and corresponding to these the democratic movement has three distinct aspects. The first may be termed the political or governmental, the second the ethical, and the third the dynamic.

It is in the first of these senses that the word "democracy" is commonly used, and the democratic movement is commonly regarded as primarily political. In this sense democracy means "the right of the majority to rule." "Whatever else democracy may be," says John Morley, "it means in our modern age government by public opinion—the public opinion of a majority armed with a political or social supremacy by

the electoral vote, from whatever social classes and strata that majority may be made up."[3]

In its ethical sense democracy means the sacredness of the life of the individual. It means that every individual is to be treated as an end, not a means. It means, so far as social organization goes, that there should be an open road to talent, that is, an equal opportunity for all; and this in turn implies responsiveness on the part of those in authority to the just needs and desires of all. Or, as Dewey puts it, it means the resolve "that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society."

What I have termed the dynamic meaning of democracy is not so commonly recognized. Yet it is the basal and in a certain sense the most characteristic element in the modern democratic movement. I refer to the belief in social progress through man's own initiative. G. P. Adams, in his able and suggestive work on *Idealism and the Modern Age,* puts the case thus: "Democracy as an idea and an attitude stands for man's interest in mastering and molding his world rather than in participating in structures which are already real" (p. 23). "The conscious conviction," he says, "that the only social order fit for man to

[3] *Miscellanies* (Fourth Series), p. 266.

live in is one which he himself has made and can control—and which he can unmake if he so desires—this conviction is but democracy come to full consciousness of its meaning and its power" (p. 7). In line with this is Mazzini's definition of democracy as "the progress of all through all, under the leadership of the best and the wisest," and also Morley's statement that "what guides, inspires, and sustains democracy is conviction of upward and onward progress in the destinies of mankind."[4]

These three meanings of democracy sustain a certain relation to each other, and they all represent aspects of the modern democratic movement. But in its political and ethical sense democracy is not from the religious point of view characteristically modern. It does not stand opposed to traditional Christian thought. Rather does it constitute a bond of union between the modern world and the ancient Christian world. The ultimate basis and the historic root of ethical democracy are to be found in the Christian conception of the direct and equal relationship of all men to God. In this sense Ludwig Stein is right in saying that "the Bible of the Old and New Testaments is and will continue to be the world's most democratic book."[5] The political consequences of biblical

[4] *Miscellanies* (Fourth Series), p. 291f.

[5] *Die Soziale Frage im Lichte der Philosophie*, p. 505.

democracy were not, it is true, worked out in the ancient world. Conditions rendered that virtually impossible. But the modern movement toward democracy is, as C. A. Ellwood says, "the political counterpart" of Christianity. "With its emphasis upon fraternity," he adds, "and upon the equality and liberty which are necessary for fraternity, democracy is evidently the same movement in the social and political realm as Christianity in the ethical and religious realm." "The Protestant Reformation," he further says, "prepared the way for the individual freedom of the modern world. The Methodist movement among English-speaking peoples again undoubtedly was a forerunner of nineteenth-century democracy in Britain and America."[6] Democracy, therefore, in its common political and ethical meaning does not from the religious standpoint constitute a differentiating feature of the modern thought world.

The situation, however, is different with democracy in its dynamic sense. Here we come upon a characteristic modern idea. The belief in social progress as a law of human life is of comparatively recent origin. A quite different view prevailed in antiquity and during the Middle Ages. The Christian tradition did not look forward to an indefinite period of progress for man-

[6] *The Reconstruction of Religion,* pp. 70, 248, 76.

kind on this planet, and least of all did it contemplate any such progress as due to man's own initiative. The latter idea grew up in connection with and as a result of the development of modern science, and is manifestly one of the outstanding as well as distinctive beliefs of our day. "The greatest of all modern ideas," says R. B. Perry, "in its originality, in its widespread adoption and in its far-reaching importance is, I believe, the idea that man can make his own way through all the difficulties and dangers that beset him by means of applied science or technology."[7] It is this idea that is the driving force back of the democratic movement and that constitutes what I call dynamic democracy. G. P. Adams goes so far as to identify "democracy" with this particular interpretation of it; but the political and ethical associations of the term are so natural and inevitable that its unqualified use in the above dynamic sense is likely to lead to confusion. It seems better, therefore, to substitute for the word "democracy," as used by Adams, its specific and essential meaning, which is that of belief in social progress through human effort. It is this belief rather than democracy in the general sense of the term that constitutes the second great characteristic factor in the modern thought world, science being the first.

[7] *The Present Conflict of Ideals*, p. 58.

But science and the belief in social progress are not the only great and distinctive elements in the modern "idea-system." There is at least one other that must be added if we are to understand the age in which we live. This third factor may be termed the socio-economic interest. As the name indicates, this interest is double: it is both social and economic. But it is also single in the sense that its two constituent elements involve each other. The effort, for instance, is being made in our day to solve the social problem through economic means and the economic problem through social means. The two interests are thus fused into a single socio-economic interest. This interest, like the belief in social progress, stands related to the democratic movement, especially in its more recent "industrial" form. The modern age taken as a whole has, it is true, laid much stress on the rights of the individual, but during the past century its tendency has been strongly toward the social emphasis. The individual, it is held, cannot be redeemed apart from society; and the redemption alike of the individual and of society, it is contended, is impossible without the improvement of economic conditions. Interest, consequently, tends to center in political and economic measures. It is to them that the people are looking for relief, rather than to any form of moral or spiritual regeneration. The

socio-economic interest is thus most distinctly a this-worldly interest, and so stands more or less opposed to the traditional Christian attitude.

Science, the belief in progress, and *the socio-economic interest*—these, then, are the great outstanding characteristics of the modern thought world. Together they tend to form a unified system. The dynamic of the system is found in the belief in progress through human effort; the goal is determined by the socio-economic interest; and the means of its attainment are furnished by science. This is the logical relation of the three factors when viewed as an organic whole. But actually and historically the scientific movement is and has been basal and primary. It is the achievements of science more than anything else that have given rise to the belief in social progress and that have stimulated the modern economic interest. No doubt the economic interest and the belief in social progress have in turn contributed to the development of science. But as a characteristic modern movement science came first. It is science also that is theoretically most important and that has most profoundly affected traditional Christian belief. It is with it, therefore, that we must take our start in the study of the modern thought world from the religious point of view. Science is the center from which radiate the great characteristic features of the modern

age. But science, it is to be borne in mind, is not simply a theoretical movement. It is a practical attitude, a spiritual impulse, and as such is linked up with the belief in progress and with the socio-economic interest. These three forces constitute a kind of religion or substitute for religion. What Christianity consequently confronts in the modern world is not simply certain intellectual divergences from its own doctrinal standpoint, but a more or less alien and hostile faith. This faith we must understand, if we are really to comprehend the task that faces the Christian Church to-day; and to understand it we need to study more in detail its component elements. We begin with science, the basal and central element.

Science

In the abstract there is no conflict between science and religion. Each has its own distinctive field. Science in its purity is strictly empirical. It is concerned simply with facts, with their classification and the laws that govern their appearance. The question of cause in the efficient or metaphysical sense of the term lies beyond its domain. Science has nothing to do with the first cause or the final cause of things. The ultimate explanation of the world belongs to religion and to philosophy. What religion is interested in and asserts, is the dependence of the

world upon God and its adaptability to his purposes. It has no vital concern in any particular view concerning the history of the world and the history of man. To settle questions of this kind is the task of science. Its function is to ascertain the order and sequence of phenomena in the space and time world. What religion, on the other hand, is concerned with is the power world, the world of efficient cause and purpose. So long as it is able to find back of the phenomenal order the power and purpose of God, it is content. Science may reconstruct the popular and traditional notions relative to that order as it wishes; religion in its essential nature is unaffected by it. Between pure science and pure religion there is, therefore, no conflict. One does not exclude the other, and neither necessarily implies the other. They sustain to each other a relation of complete neutrality.

But while this is true in the ideal, the actual relation of modern science and religion to each other has been very different. Between the two there has been a long warfare.[8] This is due to the fact that neither has existed in its purity. Religion has come down to us with a large admixture of extraneous material, scientific, historical, and philosophical. Much of this extraneous

[8] See Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology.*

material was at the beginning of the modern era so closely interwoven with the strands of genuine religious faith that together they seemed to form a necessary unity. To attempt to detach the religious element from its traditional theology and its traditional intellectual associations seemed destructive of the religious element itself. Hence religion has at times been misled into opposing modern science in its own field because of its divergences from the traditions of the past. On the other hand, science has seldom recognized its own limitations. It has constantly been tempted to take itself too seriously. It has regarded itself as competent to pronounce upon questions that lie beyond its proper domain. The result is that much that has passed for science has really belonged to philosophy and theology, and has been anti-religious in its tendency. The so-called scientific philosophies have also usually been unfavorable to religion. There has thus been mutual aggression on the part both of religion and science. Science has invaded the realm of religion, and religion the realm of science. The consequence has been a long-drawn-out struggle between them. Each side has had its victories and its defeats. Some issues between them have been settled, but complete peace has not yet been attained. The general tendency has been, as the struggle progressed, to establish a *modus vivendi*

by purging each side of its extraneous elements. Religion has been more and more divested of its traditional and obsolete science; and science has been gradually relieved of its unwarranted metaphysical assumptions. The movement has thus been gradually in the direction of a mutual understanding.

But in this process of adjustment Christian thought has undergone marked changes, and in order to be prepared to understand these changes we need to consider a little more fully the main points involved in the past struggle. In what particular respects, we consequently ask, has the scientific movement been actually or apparently hostile to historic Christianity? In answer to this question three different specifications may be made and briefly discussed.

First, science has tended to eliminate the idea of God from human thought. It has been the breeder of materialistic and positivistic philosophies and so the ally of atheism and agnosticism. In this rôle it has, to be sure, transgressed its own limits and been untrue to its own distinctive nature. But that as an historical movement it has actually had these anti-religious effects, can hardly be questioned. For a considerable time natural science was interpreted or, rather, misinterpreted, in a materialistic sense. It did not itself give rise to materialism. Materialism is an ancient

type of thought. It is, as Lange says in beginning his famous *History of Materialism,* "as old as philosophy, but no older." That is, materialism is not an immediate datum of experience. It is as much a theoretical construction as is any philosophy. But it is a theory into which the human mind almost instinctively falls. For the mind goes directly to its sense objects. These are apparently the real things in experience, and they seem to exist in lumpish externality to all thought. Materiality, consequently, comes with many people to be the mark and test of reality. This was the case in early Greek thought. The first Greek philosophers were materialists. But they regarded matter as living; they were hylozoists. It was Democritus who in the form of atomism first introduced a consistent and thoroughgoing materialism. He did not originate the atomic theory, but it was he who first brought it to full development. "Only in opinion," he said, "consists sweetness, bitterness, warmth, cold, color; in truth, there is nothing but atoms and empty space."[9] This theory was later given considerable currency by Lucretius. But on the whole it was the idealistic reaction under Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that gave direction to later Greek thought; and with the triumph of Christianity this type of philosophy naturally be-

[9]Quoted in Lange's *History of Materialism,* i, p. 23.

came dominant, remaining such till the dawn of the modern era.

With the rise of modern science we have a revival of materialism. The atomic theory of Democritus lent itself readily to the purposes of natural science, and hence the two seemed naturally leagued together. The scientists did not as a rule draw the full metaphysical implications of atomism, and hence cannot in strict accuracy be called materialists. They were rather dualists, acknowledging a spiritual reality alongside of the physical; practical considerations led them to take this position. But modern materialism has always asserted its alliance with science. It regards itself as implicit in natural science. Materialism, it is claimed, is "a simple extension of science"; it is "the philosophical generalization of science"; it is "the scientific philosophy." And if we accept the common scientific distinction between primary and secondary qualities as expressing respectively the self-subsisting world and the world of passing appearance, we practically, as Pringle-Pattison says, "adopt the fundamental presupposition of materialism." The path from natural science to a materialistic philosophy is thus an easy one, and to many it seems the only logical path. Enrico Ferri, for instance, the distinguished Italian socialist, says: "It is not socialism that develops atheism. . . . The struggle for atheism is the

business of science."[10] His idea apparently, like that of many others, is that natural science is able to explain the world without appealing to a spiritual principle of any kind, and hence is now prepared, as Comte said, to conduct God to the border of the universe and there bow him out with thanks for past services.

But easy and inevitable as materialistic atheism seems to many a mind trained in natural science, it has not been able to stand the test of modern criticism. Psychological analysis since the time of Berkeley and Hume has made it clear that the "things" of materialistic theory are not given in immediate experience; they are intellectual constructs. Logic with its sharper definition of "matter" and "spirit" has shown that there is an impassable gulf between these two kinds of being, and that the psychical cannot be deduced from the physical. Epistemology has pointed out the fact that a necessitarian system, such as materialism, overthrows the distinction between truth and error and involves reason in complete collapse. Ethics has made it evident that such a system also undermines the logical basis of responsibility and thus destroys morality altogether. Metaphysics, furthermore, has shown that material or impersonal reality cannot be construed in thought without inner contradiction. It is only on the

[10] *Socialism and Modern Science,* pp. 65f.

personal plane that the change and identity and the unity and plurality involved in the conception of reality can be brought into harmony with each other.

These different lines of criticism have gradually had their effect on thoughtful people, and the result is that at least in professional philosophical circles materialism has fallen into disrepute. If men still hold essentially the materialistic position, they usually camouflage it by repudiating the term "materialism" and calling their system "monism" or "naturalism" or "agnosticism." But under whatever name it may be known, materialism has undergone a marked decline in favor during the past fifty years. Men have gradually come to see that Comte was right when he said that materialists or atheists are "the most illogical of theologists, because they occupy themselves with theological problems, and yet reject the only appropriate method of handling them."[11] As a matter of fact, "to think clearly about materialism is," as Lange says, "to refute it." "It is," says Eucken, "precisely the sharper modern definition of the conception of body and soul, a precision vital to exact science, which has made materialism impossible as a cosmic philosophy." Bowne is, then, but stating a simple fact when he characterizes materialism or

[11] *A General View of Positivism*, p. 50.

atheism as "philosophical illiteracy." It is only among the uncritical that it still has a certain vogue.

Natural science, consequently, is not so commonly interpreted in a materialistic sense as was once the case. But this does not mean that it has ceased to be a disturber of our religious peace. The tendency now is to interpret science in a positivistic sense, and this is hardly less inimical to religion than materialism and atheism. Formally the positivistic interpretation of science marks a retreat on the part of anti-religious thinkers. It is a virtual confession on their part that in the field of metaphysics they have met defeat. The truth is that metaphysics must either be idealistic and personalistic or cease to be a subject of scholarly investigation. And this is practically admitted by positivism. For the anti-religious thinker, therefore, to become a positivist is to surrender his first-line trenches. It means that he no longer has a metaphysic to oppose to that of religion. But this does not mean that he has relented in his opposition to religion, nor does it mean that he regards the second-line trenches to which he has withdrawn as any less secure or as any less advantageous for purposes of attack. Rather does he insist that it was only in ignorance that the first-line trenches were ever constructed. They properly belong to no-man's land.

Metaphysics is not a region in which the human intellect can move safely about; indeed, it is not a region that the human intellect can even penetrate. Whether there is such a thing as metaphysical reality at all, it is claimed, is very doubtful. Substance and cause, as commonly understood, are misleading categories. They have no place in science. There is no real existence corresponding to them. And even if there is, it is absolutely unknowable. So theism is as untenable as materialism. What the positivistic interpretation of science does, therefore, is simply to change the line of attack upon religion. It is not now claimed that materialism is a more satisfactory metaphysics than theism. What is claimed is that both theism and materialism represent completely mistaken efforts of the human intellect. Knowledge is limited to the phenomenal world; it is exhausted in empirical science. Science, then, does not necessarily favor materialism as over against theism. It, rather, excludes both. And this is as fatal to religion as is materialism itself; it stamps all religion as illusion. For religion has no second-line trenches to which it can retreat. It must maintain its belief in a metaphysical reality and a knowable metaphysical reality or surrender its own existence. A religion without God and a knowable God is no religion.

It is, of course, possible to combine philosophical skepticism with religious faith and in this way apparently to effect a reconciliation between positivistic science and religion. But this at best is but a halfway measure, and as a matter of fact is true neither to the distinctive nature of religion nor to that of positivism. Strict positivism denies all knowledge of ultimate reality from whatever source it may come; and religion just as distinctly implies such knowledge. The fact that religion ascribes its knowledge of God to "revelation" or "faith" or some mystical experience rather than to philosophical or scientific speculation does not in the least degree affect its fundamental claim to knowledge. It has recently been argued that if all religion requires is ignorance, there is no danger of its being put out of business by science.[12] But religion cannot live on ignorance. However distrustful religion may at times have been of human reason, it has never weakened in the confidence with which it has asserted the reality of God. Consistent positivism and true religion thus stand fundamentally opposed to each other.

But positivism has not, as a rule, taken the form of a self-consistent system; it has, rather, represented a philosophical tendency. This ten-

[12]See R. B. Perry, *The Present Conflict of Ideals*, p. 57.

dency received its first clear modern expression in the sensationalistic idealism of David Hume. Since his time it has manifested itself in at least six other forms. We may distinguish the Positivism of Auguste Comte, the Agnosticism of Herbert Spencer, Neo-Kantianism as represented by Albert Lange and the Marburg School, Pragmatism both of the James-Schiller and Dewey types, Empirio-criticism or the Philosophy of Pure Experience as expounded by Avenarius and Mach, and Neo-realism in both its English and American casts. Of these seven positivistic movements only two are thoroughgoing in their positivism, and exclude altogether the religious idea of God. These are the Positivism of Comte and the Empirio-criticism of Avenarius and Mach. The other movements to some degree qualify their positivism, and hence are less dogmatic in their attitude toward religion. Pragmatism of the James-Schiller type has even been used as an apologetic for traditional religious faith; and Neo-Kantianism has not been altogether unfriendly to religion in its historical form. Some of the new realists leave a place for a finite God, and Spencer gave us a metaphysical Deity in the Unknowable. David Hume held to what has been termed an "attenuated theism." He thought "that the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human

intelligence"; but this conclusion, he said, "affords no inference that affects human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance." Such a position is, of course, equivalent to practical atheism; and at times Hume was ready to commit all books on divinity and metaphysics to the flames on the ground that they contained "nothing but sophistry and illusion." In this respect he represents the general as well as the logical tendency of the positivistic philosophies. Whatever concessions some of these philosophies may have made to religious faith, they incline as a whole toward complete agnosticism and the theory of illusionism. Religion from their standpoint may be a useful and even a necessary factor in human life, but it is an illusion nevertheless. There is for them no knowable reality beyond that which is revealed in empirical science. This is the form which anti-religious philosophy commonly takes to-day; and in some respects it is more insidious and more difficult to meet than the materialistic science of three quarters of a century ago.

In dealing with the positivistic interpretation of science three points have been emphasized by idealistic critics.

First, it has been pointed out that positivism is not science but an assertion about science. To limit knowledge to science is to transcend sci-

ence; and to base such a limitation of knowledge upon science is as much a dogmatic misinterpretation of science as is materialism.

In the second place, it has been shown that positivism is a reaction against a mistaken conception of metaphysics and that to a large extent it derives its strength from this misconception. It is supposed by many that metaphysics implies the existence of a back-lying substance, a core of being, distinct from the qualities and phenomena that constitute the world of our experience. This metaphysical reality is supposed to have a thing-like existence; indeed, it is spoken of as "the thing-in-itself." And metaphysics, it is thought, is concerned solely with this hidden essence of things. But inquiry of this kind is bootless. Not only has history proved it such, but the most searching analysis of the structure of the human reason has shown that the thing-in-itself lies beyond the range of human knowledge. So positivism rejects metaphysics altogether, and in doing so apparently falls in line with common sense. There is a popular gibe to the effect that "the metaphysician is a blind man in a dark room looking for a black hat that isn't there"; and even a distinguished philosopher has humorously said that metaphysics is "the systematic misuse of a terminology expressly invented for that purpose." But as a matter of fact the idea of the

thing-in-itself is the product of crude realism. Critical metaphysics finds no place for it. It sees in it simply "a phantom created by a misguided logic," and the resulting agnosticism it attributes to a "perfectly gratuitous mystification." Positivism, then, is right in rejecting what some one has called "the great German fog-generator, the thing-in-itself"; but it is totally mistaken in supposing that this idea is essential to metaphysics and that the only alternative to its acceptance is the positivistic position. True metaphysics is concerned simply with the causal ground and connection of things. It recognizes no back-lying reality trying to peer through the masking phenomena of experience. This notion is a pure fiction, a mere shadow of the mind's own throwing. But there is nevertheless an unpicturable bond of union between things; and the function of metaphysics is to lay bare this bond, to reduce the apparently disconnected facts of experience to a coherent system, and thus to disclose the causal ground of the whole. This is a line of inquiry distinct from and transcending the field of the special sciences.

A third criticism passed on positivism is that it fails to provide for that ground and connection of things which the human mind demands. This demand is not confined to metaphysical speculation; it is implicit in all science. Science assumes

a real connection between things; and to deny this connection, to rule out the ideas of cause and substance, is to undermine science itself. Science need not concern itself with the nature of this causal bond; that problem belongs to metaphysics. But that there is such a causal bond is implicit in all scientific thinking. Without it we would have a groundless becoming, existence would be reduced to a Heraclitic flow; and this is a conception in which the human mind cannot rest. "Causal inquiry," as Bowne says, "though driven out with a fork, has always come running back and always will."[13] Nature is too strong for the positivist. Positivism, indeed, is only a form of intellectual asceticism or mortification resorted to now and then by the human spirit as a kind of penitence for the occasional over-indulgence of its cognitive impulse. As a reaction, for instance, against absolute idealism it is quite intelligible; but it constitutes no permanent resting place for the human spirit. It is at best a half-way house, and must eventually give way again to metaphysics. For the present, however, it represents the dominant secular mood, and its apparent alliance with science gives to it great influence and prestige. It is positivistic science that is to-day the great intellectual foe of religion. Agnosticism and atheism

[13] *Personalism*, Preface, p. vii.

follow in its train. For this science itself is not directly responsible, but that the modern scientific movement has encouraged the rise of the positivistic type of thought is manifest.

The *second* respect in which modern science has come into conflict with religion is in tending to dethrone man from that central place in the universe which he had previously been supposed to occupy. The traditional Christian view of the world was both geocentric and anthropocentric. The earth was regarded not only as the center and main part of the universe but as having its end and explanation in man. "Just as man," said Peter Lombard, "is made for the sake of God—that is, that he may serve him—so the universe is made for the sake of man—that is, that it may serve him; therefore is man placed at the middle point of the universe, that he may both serve and be served." The geocentric and anthropocentric standpoint was thus wrought into the very structure of Christian thought. Indeed, it formed the background of the whole divine drama of creation and redemption. It came, then, as a rude shock to Christian faith, when at the very beginning of the modern era science promulgated what is known as the Copernican astronomy. The very foundations of Christian theology seemed to be undermined by the new theory. For if the earth is not the center

of the universe but simply a comparatively small body revolving around the sun, and if there are countless other solar systems as large as ours. what reasonable ground can there be for believing that man occupies any such central place in the divine thought and plan as is implied in the Christian system? Would it not seem that on this theory man as well as the earth is reduced to utter insignificance?

At the very outset there was thus a sharp clash between modern science and religion. The two seemed to be at complete variance in their estimate of man. And the sense of disparity between them on this point has not yet completely vanished. But the initial tension created by the promulgation of the Copernican astronomy gradually relaxed. Christian theology slowly adjusted itself to the new theory. It did so by stressing the fact that it is not mere bulk or size that constitutes worth. From the spatial point of view man may be an altogether insignificant being, but from the standpoint of value the situation is entirely different. No matter what may be said in the Copernican astronomy about the immensities of space, "in the world there is nothing great but man, and in man there is nothing great but mind." Man's possession of mind, of intelligence, sets him on high above those "two great intimidating phantoms"—space and time—and

restores to him again that primacy which he had enjoyed in earlier times.

But hardly had this line of thought brought about a fairly comfortable *modus vivendi* between modern science and religion, when the Christian estimate of man received another rude shock. This time it came from the field of biology. The Darwinian theory of man's descent seemed at first to destroy that very claim to spiritual pre-eminence and unique worth which had made possible a reconciliation between Christian faith and the Copernican astronomy. For man, we were now told, is genealogically related to the lower animals. There is no such gulf separating the human from the animal world as was formerly supposed. The magic word "evolution" has bound them together. Man now comes into the world trailing, not clouds of glory, but a brute ancestry. There is in him no divine spark that assures to him a unique destiny. His entire nature is of the earth earthy.

This "second degradation" that man has suffered at the hands of modern science seemed at the outset even more serious than the first, and another clash between faith and science resulted. At first Christian apologists thought it their duty to dispute the new scientific theory, and some still operate on that basis. But on the whole wiser counsels have prevailed. Philosophic criti-

cism has shown that it is not the scientific doctrine of evolution that faith has to fear but only a materialistic interpretation of it. Evolution may be regarded as either causal or modal. In the former sense it is simply a materialistic philosophy, and as such is exposed to all those criticisms which have justly brought that type of thought into disrepute. In the latter sense it is merely a mode or law of operation, and as such is perfectly consistent with a theistic and Christian view of the world. Evolution as such creates nothing. The question as to the origin and destiny of man's soul is, therefore, quite independent of the question as to his pedigree. Souls in any case are not actually transmitted from parents to children. If real at all, they owe their origin to the divine power that maintains the present world order; they come from God who is their home. It is then a matter of indifference whether the Darwinian theory of man's descent is correct or not. There is in the theory nothing that necessarily conflicts with the Christian faith. Such is the line of thought adopted by our current apologetics, and that it is logically sound can hardly be gainsaid. But, on the other hand, it can hardly be denied that the modern scientific atmosphere is not altogether favorable to the religious and Christian estimate of man. "For a hundred and fifty years past," as William James says, "the

progress of science has seemed to mean the enlargement of the material universe and the diminution of man's importance. The result is what one may call the growth of naturalistic and positivistic feeling. . . . Ideals appear as inert by-products of physiology."[14] So, whatever logic may say, the Christian faith in the unique dignity and immortal destiny of man, though able to maintain itself in the modern thought world, is nevertheless forced to struggle against adverse conditions.

The *third* point of conflict between modern science and religion is found in the idea of the reign of law. By its stress on this idea science has tended to discredit the biblical miracles and to destroy faith in Providence and in answers to prayer. There was, of course, in the ancient and Christian world some notion of the uniformity of nature. But people of that day had no conception of a fixed system of natural law. Miracles were regarded as not uncommon events; at least they created no problem for thought. Even the greatest of the church Fathers, such as Origen and Augustine, credited the most fantastic stories of magical and demonic agency in the world. But all this was changed with the advent of modern natural science. Law and necessity now became supreme. Nature was

[14] *Pragmatism*, p. 16.

erected into a vast mechanical system operating by virtue of forces resident within itself. These forces were regarded as absolutely fixed and determined by law. They moved with unerring precision, and left no place for miracles and answers to prayer. If such events actually occurred, they were due to violations of natural law, to direct divine interpositions. And with the progress of science such interpositions were less and less needed to explain the known facts of life. Hence there was an inevitable tendency to discredit all reports of miracles, whether biblical or extrabiblical, and to see in nature a fixed order with which no will can interfere.

This rigid and dogmatic view of nature is essentially materialistic, and so has gradually succumbed to the criticisms that have undermined materialism itself. But while the necessitarian and dogmatic element is less prominent in the current scientific view of nature, and while less stress is laid on the rationality and systematic totality of the physical universe than heretofore, the belief in the reign of law is as firmly established as ever. Law is not regarded as a necessity of the constitution of things in the way it was. Under the influence of the positivistic tendency of recent times nature has lost something of its rigidity. It has in the thought of our day become more plastic. It is viewed as to some

extent a living and growing thing. New elements and new departures are not necessarily excluded from it. This holds true even of the view held by naturalistic thinkers, and fits in, of course, harmoniously with the current theistic conception of the divine immanence. God does not need to change the course of nature in order to answer prayer. Nature is no longer regarded as a self-running mechanism. God can introduce new factors into it and work out his own purposes through it without interfering with the essential uniformity of its laws. Miracles, too, from this point of view cease to be interpositions from without. They represent simply the unusual in the divine procedure. The natural is the familiar, and the miraculous the unfamiliar. One is as dependent on the divine causality as the other. There is, then, nothing impossible or irrational in the idea of miracle. Even the positivist would admit this.

The reign of law, therefore, contains no necessary obstacle to faith. Rather has it become one of the great evidences of the intelligence of the world ground. Order is the natural and necessary form under which the divine reason expresses itself. So generally has this idea come to be accepted that it is possible for one of our most distinguished Christian thinkers to say that "the undivineness of the natural and the un-

naturalness of the divine is the great heresy of popular thought respecting religion.[15]

But while the mechanical view of nature has thus been weakened, and while the abstract possibility of miracle is more widely conceded than was the case a generation ago, the question still remains open as to whether miracles actually do occur or ever did occur. And under the pressure of scientific teaching the manifest tendency in religious thought is to lay less stress than heretofore on the fact of miracle. Whether miracles occur in *our* time or not, has clearly no vital relation to our religious faith. If God is the ever-present cause of the existing world order, that is all we need. The only respect in which the question of miracles has any serious significance for us is in its bearing on the historicity of the Gospels. And here the tendency is to detach the essential truth of Christianity from all necessary dependence upon the gospel miracles. Indeed, many Christian thinkers reject altogether the miraculous element in Scripture. They may admit that Jesus in a marvelous way healed the sick, but these acts they do not regard as strictly miraculous. The real miracles—the so-called nature-miracles—such as the raising of the dead, the walking on the water, and the feeding of the five thousand, they regard as mythical or

[15]B. P. Bowne, *The Immanence of God,* Preface.

legendary. Now, this tendency is manifestly having a serious effect on traditional Christian belief; and the full consequences of it have not yet been wrought out. Our conception of the divinity and authority of Christ will necessarily be profoundly affected by it.

It is, then, evident that the modern scientific movement has had a very important bearing on religious faith. It has encouraged the rise of materialistic and positivistic philosophies which by their very nature have sought to eliminate the idea of God; it has by its astronomical and biological theories tended to dethrone man from that central place of dignity and worth ascribed to him by the Christian faith; and by its stress on the reign of law it has in no small measure tended to destroy the credibility of scriptural history. These are in the main the consequences of science in its theoretical aspect. But science has also its practical character. It is a faith as well as a theory. And as a faith it manifests itself, as we have seen, in the belief in social progress and in the dominant socio-economic interest of our day. We pass, therefore, to a consideration of these other factors in our modern thought world.

The Belief in Social Progress

The belief in social progress stands in a double

relation to science, and this double relation represents two different conceptions of progress.

The first of these conceptions is *naturalistic*. According to it social progress is a law of nature, and as such is simply a specification under the more general law of cosmic and biological evolution. Evolution is one of the great ideas of modern times. Correctly understood, it has to do only with the phenomenal order. It is purely descriptive in nature. But, like other scientific laws, it has been interpreted causally as a necessity inherent in the constitution of things. According to this interpretation, development belongs to the very structure of reality, and social progress as a part of the general evolutionary movement is unavoidable. It has about it all the certainty and inevitableness of a scientific law. Herbert Spencer, for instance, says: "Progress is not an accident but a necessity. What we call evil and immorality *must* disappear. It is certain that man must become perfect." Again he says: "The ultimate development of the ideal man is certain—as certain as any conclusion in which we place the most implicit faith; for instance, that all men will die." And J. B. Bury declares that "the process must be the necessary outcome of the psychical and social nature of man; it must not be at the mercy of any external will; otherwise there would be no guarantee of

its continuance and its issue, and the idea of Progress would lapse into the idea of Providence."[16] But this idea of progress as a certainty and a necessity is, as John Morley says, a "superstition—the most splendid and animated superstition, if we will, yet a superstition after all." "It often deepens," he adds, "into a kind of fatalism, radiant, confident, and infinitely hopeful, yet fatalism still, and, like fatalism in all its forms, fraught with inevitable peril, first to the effective sense of individual responsibilty, and then to the successful working of principles and institutions of which that responsibility is the vital sap."[17] There is then no warrant for the view that social progress is an objective law, a scientific certainty. This conception of progress is a conclusion drawn from a naturalistic and necessitarian philosophy, and would, if generally accepted, destroy the very conditions of progress. Yet for a century and a half past it has been current and has exercised a wide influence. It has been regarded as a substitute both for the doctrine of providence and the hope of a future life.

The other conception of progress may be designated as *ethical.* According to it social progress is a conquest, not a bequest; it is a task, not a

[16] *The Idea of Progress,* p. 5.

[17] *Miscellanies* (Fourth Series), p. 293. See also A. J. Todd, *Theories of Social Progress,* p. 105.

gift; it is contingent, not necessary. What guarantees it is not the truth but the utility of science. Science does not reveal progress as a law of nature; it furnishes the means by which it may be achieved. The ethical conception of progress thus differs from the naturalistic in that it is based on the practical rather than the theoretical side of modern science. It is linked with pragmatism, not with dogmatic necessitarianism. But it is not on that account held with any less confidence and enthusiasm. A. J. Balfour is no doubt right in saying that progressive civilization "is a tender habit, difficult to propagate, not difficult to destroy, that refuses to flourish except in a soil which is not to be found everywhere, nor at all times, nor even, so far as we can see, necessarily to be found at all."[18] But difficult as it may be to achieve, there is the utmost confidence that modern science has placed indefinite social progress within our grasp. This confidence has been, as Morley says, "the mainspring of Liberalism in all its schools and branches," and is, as Bury says, "the animating and controlling idea of Western civilization." "That the control of nature," says, R. B. Perry, "through the advancement of knowledge is the instrument of progress and the chief ground of hope, is the axiom of modern civilization. . . . The good is to be won

[18] *Essays and Addresses,* p. 244.

by the race and for the race; it lies in the future, and can result only from prolonged and collective endeavor; and the power to achieve it lies in the progressive knowledge and control of nature." The result is that "man now greets the future with a new and unbounded hopefulness. Indeed, this faith in the power of life to establish and magnify itself through the progressive mastery of its environment, is the most significant religious idea of modern times."[19]

Such is the nature and temper of the modern belief in social progress. The belief itself in its ethical form does not contain anything that is necessarily at variance with the fundamental doctrines of historic Christianity. The gradual improvement of the external conditions of life through science and human initiative is not necessarily inconsistent with the belief in providence, nor is the expectation that a terrestrial millennium will ultimately be established in this way, necessarily out of harmony with the belief in a life to come. Doctrinally the theological and the modern social standpoints can be adjusted to each other; the idea of the divine immanence makes this possible. But while this is true, the tone and temper of the two standpoints is manifestly quite different. The current belief in social progress is largely secular in character, and stresses the

[19] *Present Philosophical Tendencies,* pp. 4f., 47f.

human factor to the neglect, if not the exclusion, of the divine. Its interest thus moves in a different groove from the distinctively religious, and, insofar as it tends to regard itself as self-sufficient, it encourages human pride and self-satisfaction. It also emphasizes external and this-worldly considerations, and so comes into conflict with the inwardness of Christianity and its stress on the eternal and the ideal.

Then, too, the modern outlook into the future is quite different from that of historical Christianity. In order properly to appreciate this difference it may be well to direct attention to the fact that as regards the future there have been three different and successive world-views.

First, there was the ancient belief in a series of world-cycles. According to this belief the universe passes through one cycle after another. Each cycle is an exact repetition of those that have preceded. There is, therefore, no progress, no development. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. 1. 9).

This was the prevailing view in the ancient heathen world, and it was by way of contrast with it that the apocalyptic hope of the Jews arose. According to this hope the present cycle would come to an end, would come to an end sooner

than the heathen expected, but when it came to an end, there would not be another cycle similar to it. Instead there would be a mighty divine intervention. An altogether new world-order would be established. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65. 17). This outlook formed the intellectual background of both the Old and New Testaments, and by way of contrast with the belief in a series of world-cycles represented a distinct advance. It was optimistic, it asserted the moral government of the world, it predicted the final triumph of the right. But while this is true, it remained essentially pessimistic with reference to the present world-order. It did not look forward to the gradual improvement of existing social conditions. At first the end was regarded as too imminent to leave time for such improvement, and after the belief in the imminence of Christ's return was generally given up, conditions did not favor the rise of the social hope. The earlier pessimistic view consequently continued. Not until modern times did the third world-view, the belief in social progress, arise.

This view is now dominant. People generally to-day look forward to an indefinite period of development for mankind on earth. In this outlook there is, as has already been pointed out,

nothing that contradicts any fundamental Christian doctrine, but there is in it a rather sharp divergence from the traditional Christian eschatology. And some people see here a radical difference of standpoint. Franz Overbeck, for instance, declares that "the contradiction between the old Christian eschatology and the present attitude toward the future is fundamental and probably the ultimate cause of the fact that the present is at complete variance with Christianity."[20] This statement is manifestly too strong. The modern world and Christianity are not at complete variance with each other. The old Christian eschatology, at least so far as it has to do with the apocalyptic hope, is not to be identified with the Christian faith. The Christian faith in its essential nature is independent of it. Hence it is quite possible to adjust Christianity to the modern social hope. Indeed, on the part of scholars the adjustment has been to a large degree effected. But while this is true, there is an undeniable disparity between the New-Testament outlook into the future and that of to-day. To say with Schweitzer that because of his apocalyptic viewpoint the historical Jesus is "to our time a stranger and an enigma," is, of course, an extravagance. But that there is a real difficulty for faith at this point is evident

[20] *Christentum und Kultur,* p. 66.

to all. Historic Christianity and the modern belief in social progress are not altogether harmonious with each other. There is still more or less of conscious tension between them, and in the process of adjusting the one to the other both Christian belief and the Christian life are undergoing significant modifications. What these modifications are will come up for discussion in a later chapter.

The Socio-Economic Interest

We now pass to a consideration of the third distinctive factor in the modern thought world, the socio-economic interest. This interest in its characteristic modern form arose somewhat later than the belief in progress. The immediate cause of its rise is to be found in two revolutions, namely, the industrial revolution in England and the contemporaneous political and intellectual revolution in France.

The latter stimulated social interest in several different ways. First, it set before the world a new political and social ideal, embodied in the famous watchword, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Secondly, the great changes wrought by the French Revolution impressed men with the plasticity of society. Society is not an external fatality to which men must submit, as had previously been supposed; it is something that can

be shaped and reshaped by human volition. In the third place, the terrible destruction occasioned by the Revolution awakened in men the feeling that society must be studied and its laws mastered so that in the future it will be possible to avoid a repetition of such a catastrophe.

The English industrial revolution, on the other hand, brought about by the introduction of machinery, resulted in an enormous increase in production. This naturally led men to place a new emphasis on the economic factor in human life, and at the same time encouraged the hope that a new age of ease and comfort was about to be ushered in through man's inventive genius. But this hope soon received a rude shock. The factory system gave rise to great evils. The workmen found themselves in a new bondage. They had less economic security and less opportunity for self-expression than even serfs had been accustomed to. Often they were treated as mere tools, to be cast aside whenever convenience or caprice might so dictate; and the wealth, which they were producing, they shared in only meagerly. The inevitable result was a growing conviction that there was something wrong with the existing economic and social order. Political liberty was seen to be of little value without a more equitable distribution of the products of industry. Interest thus began to center in economic

conditions. Economic ills came to be regarded as fundamental in human society; if they were removed, most of the other social ills would vanish also. And that these socio-economic evils can be removed has gradually become the faith of multitudes. The existing economic system, they believe, has nothing final about it. Men made it, and what they have made they can unmake. So to-day to an unprecedented degree men are devoting their attention to social and economic problems.

This does not mean that in earlier times—in antiquity, for instance—there was no "social" or "economic" interest. Economic matters have always to some extent engaged the attention of men. The very conditions of human existence make this necessary. But among the ancients the economic sphere was not valued in principle as it is with us. Wealth was not regarded as a necessary condition of civilization; no special importance was attributed to it in the cultural life of men, nor was it looked upon as a determining factor in human history. To-day, however, it occupies a significant and worthy place in the life and thought of men. Poverty is no longer idealized, the value of the acquisitive instinct is generally recognized, and the importance of productive labor is emphasized. The economic interest has thus received a recognition in modern

times that it did not have in antiquity. And the same is also true of the "social" interest. The ancients were, of course, aware of the social aspects of human life. They knew that men live in necessary relations with each other. But they viewed this fact chiefly from the ethical standpoint. They regarded it as man's duty to be social; they did not fully realize that he by nature is such. It is the latter idea that is characteristic of our day. "If there is one truth," says W. H. Sheldon, "which may be called peculiarly modern, it is the truth that man is a *socius*."[21] The social factor is constitutive in human life. Man would not be man without it. It is in this sense that society may be said to be a modern discovery. It is now recognized, as it was not heretofore, that man is essentially a social being, that his life is largely determined by this fact, and that the proper organization of society is, therefore, a matter of paramount importance.

The social and economic interests, which have thus been developed in a unique way in modern times, do not necessarily imply each other. The economic interest might exist without the social, and often does; and the social interest might exist without special stress on the economic. That the two have been to such a large extent combined in our day is more or less of an accident,

[21] *Strife of Systems and Productive Duality*, p. 16.

due to the peculiar conditions created by the French Revolution, on the one hand, and the industrial revolution on the other. Then, too, the modern capitalistic system both by its stress on profits and by the social evils incident thereto has tended to keep the two interests together. These interests are at present pervasive. Virtually every class of society is affected one way or the other by them. But they have received their most highly specialized expression in two movements, namely, socialism and the science of sociology.

The latter, founded by Auguste Comte, is still in a more or less amorphous state. It has no established doctrines. But its most typical and influential representatives tend to make society in a certain sense the supreme reality. It is society, according to their theory, that creates the categories of thought; it is society that imposes on men moral obligations; it is society that generates those ideals or eternal values that constitute the essence of religion. Religion, morality, and reason itself are inexplicable apart from society. It is within society and only within it that they find their meaning and explanation. Everything, according to this sociological theory, is thus subordinated to the social concept. The individual as such, his reason, his conscience, his religious faith have no independent worth or sig-

nificance. And since society is at best a temporal being, all individuals with their hopes and their ideals will eventually sink into nothingness. Sociological speculation thus ends in irreligion, in atheism, or agnosticism.

Socialism in its dominant form, as represented by Karl Marx, claims to be "scientific"; but as a matter fact it is primarly an organized political and economic movement. It is a faith, a program, a dogma, and is more closely akin to religion than to science. It agrees in a general way with sociology in the dominant influence assigned to society.[22] But it emphasizes, as general sociology does not, the theory of class-struggle. For Marx and Engels this theory was "the master key of human history."[23] "The whole history of mankind," said Engels, "has been a history of class-struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes," and "the history of these class-struggles forms a series of evolution in which nowadays a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class cannot attain its emancipation without, at the same

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[22]Marx, for instance, says, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness."

[23]See J. E. Le Rossignol, *What is Socialism?* pp. 182ff.

time, and once for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions, and class-struggles."[24] This theory, it is manifest, is not an induction based on an objective study of historical facts; it is simply an attempt to justify and promote the expected proletarian revolution. It is not, then, a sociological theory in the strict scientific sense of the term; it is, rather, a preamble to a political platform.

The same is also to be said of the materialistic or economic interpretation of history which is basal in the Marxian system. Of this doctrine Enrico Ferri says that it "is truly the most scientific and the most prolific sociological theory that has ever been discovered by the genius of man. . . . Just as psychology is an effect of physiology, so the moral phenomena are effects of economic facts. . . . This is the sublime conception, the fact-founded and scientific Marxian theory, which fears no criticism, resting, as it does, on the best-established results of geology and biology, of psychology and sociology."[25] The fact, however, is that this theory involves a gross exaggeration of the importance of the economic factor in human history. To make morality and religion mere by-products of the struggle for class supremacy, a struggle that is fundamentally

[24]Preface to *Communist Manifesto,* p. 8.

[25]*Socialism and Modern Science,* pp. 163f.

economic in character, is to belie the manifest facts of life. Such a theory has no place in scientific sociology. It is simply a partisan creed designed to release the proletariat from all restraints of conscience and religion in their struggle to achieve their political and economic ends. But whatever may have been the primary motive of the theory and however inadequate may be its scientific basis, it is orthodox socialist doctrine; and as such it is intimately connected with an aggressive political and economic propaganda. This fact gives to it a significance that it might not otherwise have. The theory is, of course, based on a materialistic philosophy, and implies that all religion is an illusion. "Religion," says Marx, "is the striving of the people for an imaginary happiness; it springs from a state of society that requires an illusion, but disappears when the recognition of true happiness and the possibility of its realization penetrates the masses."[26]

Socialism, it is no doubt true, is not necessarily tied up to the materialism of Marx, and sociology likewise has no necessary connection with the positivism of Comte. The theories held by these men and their followers relative to the dominant influence of society and the economic factor in human life are extreme. Socialists and

[26]Quoted by August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism,* pp. 437f.

sociologists as a whole by no means accept them. But in a more moderate form they are widely held. They are not confined to any group or groups of people, but represent the common thought of our day. That the life of the individual is largely determined by his social environment has become almost axiomatic; and so also is the idea that economic considerations are usually the most powerful factors in determining the conduct of nations, of social groups, and of individuals. The result is that the appeal of religion to the individual does not carry the weight that it once did. It is the group idea that is now attractng the attention of men. We talk about "classes" and "forces" and "movements," but what becomes of the individual, his worth, and his destiny are to a large extent left out of account. And that this means a weakening and impoverishment of the religious life is painfully evident to every one who has been accustomed to breathing the atmosphere of the New Testament. Then, too, the economic emphasis of our time has tended to depress that ethical idealism that constitutes the very essence of spiritual religion. Ideal motives are on every hand discounted. Either their existence or their effectiveness and adaptability to mundane conditions is denied. We are witnessing about us a decay of life, and this decay is due in no small measure to the fact that

people have adopted what Bertrand Russell calls "the religion of material goods." They worship money and find in the outside world the one great source of happiness. The inevitable consequence is that the inner life is undergoing disintegration, and there is a decline of faith in the immortal destiny of the spirit and in its power to triumph over the world.

In the socio-economic interest of our day there is, then, a grave peril to true religion. In its more extreme form this interest is entirely subversive of religious faith; and in its more moderate form it acts as a devitalizing influence on it. Both Christian belief and the Christian life are profoundly affected by it; and only the future can tell what its permanent effects on historic Christianity will be.

In the analysis and survey of the modern thought world, to which this chapter has been devoted, we have observed that there are certain powerful tendencies that are hostile to religion and that aim at destroying its fundamental beliefs. These tendencies are represented by the materialistic philosophies, the positivistic philosophies, and those sociological theories that treat religion as an illusion created by society in its own interest. Materialism denies the existence of God, positivism denies the possibility of knowing him even

if he exists, and the anti-religious forms of sociology and socialism seek to show how such illusory beliefs as those in God and immortality arose. Along with these anti-religious theories and philosophies there are also in the modern thought world, as we have seen, other theories and beliefs that have had at least a disturbing effect on the Christian faith in its traditional form. Here we may mention the Copernican astronomy, the Darwinian theory of man's descent, the universal reign of law, and the idea of social progress. These ideas are not necessarily inconsistent with the basal conceptions of religion, but they have profoundly affected the Christian conception of the authority and historicity of Scripture, and by many they have been regarded as subversive of the Christian faith altogether.

Then, in addition to these forces in the modern thought world that are either hostile to religion or that have had a seriously disturbing effect upon religious thought, there is, as we have pointed out, the positive fact that in modern times the effort has been and is being made to find a substitute for religion. Instead of the belief in God and immortality we are told to place our faith in science, in social progress, and in the material welfare of men. We are not to look forward to a future heaven, but stake our all on the estab-

lishment of an earthly paradise. That some such goal is possible as the result of the scientific control of nature is, we are told, "the most significant religious idea of modern times." But this idea, accepted as a finality, manifestly implies the surrender of religion in its historic form. So Christianity is to-day confronted not only with hostile and disturbing theories and philosophies but also with a rival faith. And how to meet these alien currents in the modern thought world is a problem that will tax to the utmost the resources of Christianity.

Not since the first three or four centuries of our era has Christianity faced so grave a crisis as at the present time. Then it was necessary to transplant the Christian faith from Hebraic to Gentile soil, to make what had been a religion of Syrian peasants the religion of Greek philosophers. The process was an extremely difficult and perilous one. That the transplanting was effected without radically injuring Christianity itself is almost a miracle of history. Marvelously those early Christian thinkers, taken as a whole, appropriated what was of value in the dominant philosophy of the time, and thus accommodated Christianity to its new intellectual environment without surrendering its distinctive character. To-day the situation is equally difficult and equally perilous. Christianity at present is being

transplanted from the mediæval to the modern thought world. With us the standard of truth is found, not in Greek philosophy, but in modern science. Science is anti-authoritarian; it is both empirical and rationalistic; and it is also utilitarian. These, then, are the scientific tests of truth: experience, reason, utility. To these tests religion must submit, if it is to orient itself in the modern world. But can it successfully meet these tests?

In view of the complexity of the situation and the complexity of Christianity itself it is not surprising that the most diverse answers to this question should be given. Some think that there is a radical and necessary antithesis between religion and science; so in this group some reject religion and some science. Others hold that religion and science can be brought into accord with each other, but they follow the same method as did the Gnostics of old. They surrender the distinctive character of Christianity to what they regard as the demands of contemporary thought, or they so radically modify its nature as to deprive it of its pristine power. These people talk much about the "religious revolution" through which we are supposed to be passing. Even so sober a thinker as C. A. Ellwood tells us that "a New Reformation is necessary within the Christian Church if it is to survive, beside which the

Protestant Reformation will seem insignificant."[27] The actual change that he proposes does not turn out to be so serious as this preliminary announcement might lead one to expect. But others go so far as to transform Christianity into a mere humanitarianism; in deference to positivistic science they surrender both God and immortality. Then there are others, less radical, who are trying to assure Christianity a place in the modern world by means of various foreign alliances, alliances with sociology, with politics, with therapeutics. "Silly doves, without understanding," the prophet Hosea would have called them. We cannot today sustain a decaying faith, any more than the ancient Israelites could a decaying state, by external props. Christianity must maintain its own integrity and find its justification in itself, or cease to be. And that in the present crisis it will in this respect prove no less successful than in its ancient conflict with Greek philosophy, we have every reason to believe. Instead of itself yielding to the adverse influences of our time it will yet show itself strong enough to take the modern thought world by the rims, shake out of it its naturalism and its heathenism, and then make of the residuum a foundation on which to build its own conquering faith. Exactly how this will be done no one can say in detail. But the

[27] *The Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 1.

main lines along which the Christian religion has been and is adjusting itself to modern science and at the same time making science tributary to its own purposes, will be pointed out and discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Modern thought is autonomous. It is a law unto itself. It recognizes no supernatural standard of truth, no external authority superior to the human mind. It finds in experience, reason, and utility the sole sources of truth. What lies beyond them or contradicts them is devoid of all claim to verity. It is an illusory product of the imagination, no matter how hoary it may be with age and how well attested it may be by tradition. Mere age and tradition guarantee nothing. Everything old as well as everything new must stand the acid test either of logic or of observation and experiment before it can be accepted as true. No belief can be validated by appeal to the authority of an institution or a book. The ultimate test of truth must be found within the mind itself. Experience and reason are self-verifying. They stand in their own right. They acknowledge no masters. On the contrary, they claim authority over all the sacred beliefs and institutions of the past. None of these are immune from criticism and skepticism. Descartes,

for instance, the founder of modern philosophy, began his search after truth by doubting everything that he could. He found it possible to doubt the existence of God and that of the material world. Finally, however, he came upon one indubitable reality—the fact of his own existence; and then upon this as a basis he proceeded by logical processes to erect his own system of thought. The completed structure had its serious defects, but the method employed has been commonly regarded as valid. Modern thought begins, as did Descartes, with faith in man's unfettered reason; it holds to the autonomy of the human spirit; it is anti-authoritarian.

Religion, on the other hand, in its historical form is authoritarian in its tendency. For this there are two or three manifest reasons. First, religion by its very nature is "theonomous" rather than autonomous. It finds its source and law in God, not in man. It is God-given, not man-made. At least this is the conviction of the religious consciousness. Religious experience assumes the reality of revelation. Without revelation there would be no religion. All religion is founded on revelation, either real or supposed. It is only as the Divine Being or beings reveal themselves that we can enter into relation with them. Only through revelation can we ascertain their will. A real God, a living God,

must reveal himself. An unrevealed God, a "Veiled Being," would be a nonentity. He could not be the basis of a religion. Religion implies divine revelation; and divine revelation carries with it the idea of authority. When God speaks, it is as the voice of Truth and Law. From it there is no appeal; nor is there any desire to appeal from it on the part of the devout heart. The truly devout soul accepts the revealed Word of God and bows submissively before his revealed will. This attitude is inherent in the very nature of religion. Religion involves the idea of divine authority.

In the next place religion as an institution requires the principle of authority. No political or social organization would be possible without a superindividual or authoritative bond. The nature of this bond may be differently conceived and the seat of authority may be differently located. Some may be democratic, others aristocratic, and still others monarchic in their conception of authority. But authority there must be somewhere. The very idea of social organization and of government implies it. No institution could exist on an anarchic basis. An atomistic individualism would mean the dissolution of all social groups and of society as a whole. The very fact, therefore, that religion is social in character and that it inevitably tends to take on

an organized form, links it up with the authoritarian principle in human life.

One may, it is true, distinguish between religion and organized religion, and try to retain the former without the latter. This is a favorite idea at present with socialists and other radicals. H. G. Wells, for instance, in spite of his apostolic zeal for the new gospel of the finite God, has no place for organized religion. "Religion," he says, "cannot be organized. . . . The Christian precedent of a church is particularly misleading. The church with its sacraments and its sacerdotalism is the disease of Christianity. . . . Even such organization as is implied by a creed is to be avoided, for all living faith coagulates as you phrase it. . . . Organization for worship and collective exaltation also . . . is of little manifest good. . . . God deals only with the individual for the individual's surrender."[1] But this extreme individualism does violence to the true nature of religion. Religion is social. It is no mere amorphous sentiment. It seeks and demands organized expression. All history testifies to this fact. Unorganized religion is a truncated and mutilated religion, devoid of vitality and propagating power. It is one of the many contradictions of our superficial and self-contradictory age that many of those who emphasize

[1] *God the Invisible King*, pp. 162-169.

most strongly the need of solidarity and organization in life as a whole, deny to them a place in the field of religion. This denial is due partly to hostility to religion in its traditional form and partly to ignorance of what religion really is. It manifestly does not grow out of the religious impulse itself. This impulse, when vigorous and vital, inevitably tends toward organization and solidarity. True religion cannot be separated from organized religion. The two go together; and organized religion, like all other forms of organization, implies and requires the exercise of authority.

Then, in the third place, religion has age on its side, and age creates authority. It is so in the life of individuals, and it is so likewise in the life of society. The old becomes sacred and authoritative. Habit and mental inertia are partly responsible for this, but it is due also to the weight justly ascribed to experience. Experience is constantly sifting practices and beliefs, and those that last longest presumably have something in their favor. At least the average mind so argues, and the result is that religion by virtue of its age comes to be endowed with an altogether unique authority. This authority comes to be attached to religious beliefs and practices in general, and thus there arises a religious tradition that perpetuates itself simply

because it is tradition. The authority of tradition tends consequently to become a part of religion itself.

Religion, we thus see, by virtue of its age, its social or institutional character, and its claim to divine origin, has a natural leaning toward authoritarianism. Science, on the other hand, leans quite as naturally in the opposite direction, for it is in large part a comparatively recent development; it is also individualistic, and it is, furthermore, humanistic as distinguished from theistic. Hence it is not strange that the conflict between religion and science at first centered in the problem of authority. Christianity regarded it as a question of life and death to maintain either the authority of the church or that of the Bible; and many still hold this view. Of the two forms of authority it is that of the Bible with which we in Protestant lands are chiefly concerned, and consequently it is it to which our attention will for the most part here be directed. But before we proceed to its discussion we need to inquire briefly into the meaning of authority and its different forms.

"Authority," says J. W. Sterrett, "may be defined as the power or influence through which one does or believes what he would not of his own unaided powers."[2] In this definition noth-

[2] *The Freedom of Authority,* p. 6.

ing is said about the nature of "the power or influence" exercised by authority, whether it be rational or coercive. This feature is added by Professor Gwatkin, who defines authority as "all weight allowed to the beliefs of persons or the teachings of institutions beyond their reasonable value as personal testimony."[3] The expression "reasonable value" suggests a contrast between reason and authority. Authority lies beyond reason and is in a sense opposed to it. This is a common view. A. J. Balfour, for instance, speaks of reason as "the rival and opponent of authority." "Authority," he says, "is in all cases contrasted with reason, and stands for that group of non-rational causes, moral, social and educational, which produces its results by psychic processes other than reasoning."[4] This contrast, however, implies a narrow view of reason; there is a broader view. Besides the strictly logical and abstract reason there is a reason implicit in those very causes which Balfour calls "irrational." There is such a thing as a moral reason, an æsthetic reason, and a religious reason, all expressions of a common and unitary reason; and in this broader sense of the term "reason" manifestly constitutes no antithesis to authority. Rather is legitimate authority an expression of

[3] *The Knowledge of God*, i, p. 3.

[4] *The Foundations of Belief*, pp. 203, 227.

reason. But the word "authority" is used in different senses, and these need to be distinguished.

First, there is the *pedagogical* form of authority. This is the type of authority exercised by the teacher and the expert. Such authority is a permanent necessity in human life. Children cannot think for themselves. They accept their ideas from others. This also is true of most people. The great majority live by hearsay. Extremely few attain to intellectual maturity. And the few that do have independent sources of information only in very limited fields. The great body of their knowledge they derive from others. They accept it on authority. Knowledge begins with faith. This is the rule in human life. We never completely transcend it. Not only children but people generally to a large extent live on this level. They receive their ideas from tradition. Tradition is a tutor whose authority we all recognize, whether we are aware of it or not. Religious beliefs come to us in this way, and so also other beliefs. We do not at first reason about them, we simply accept them. Later we may take a critical attitude toward them. But for the growing mind the acceptance of authority is the path of progress, and for us all it remains an inescapable factor in our mental life. The time will never come when we will not need the

authority of the teacher and the specialist. The pedagogical form of authority is a psychological necessity, and such authority the church as well as any established institution may justly claim for itself.

Closely related to this type of authority and yet distinguishable from it is authority in the *sociological* sense of the term. Here stress is laid not on collective knowledge but on the collective will. Collective knowledge is the condition of the mental development of the individual. Of this the teacher takes advantage. It is this that gives him his authority. But not only is there a collective knowledge which the individual must appropriate in order to realize his own nature, there is also a collective will to which he must submit. This will is embodied in institutions and laws, and finds its echo in the individual conscience. But whether the individual voluntarily responds to it or not, the social or corporate will has a way of enforcing its demands. At times it may be tyrannical so that the individual revolts against it. Emerson, indeed, goes so far as to say that "whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." But this is an extreme statement. More could be said in favor of the view that only he can be a man who is a conformist. The fact is that there is a higher and a lower social will and that while the true man may rebel against

the latter he always does so in the interest of the former. It is this capacity to obey the social will that is most characteristic of man. "Though it may seem to savor of paradox," says A. J. Balfour, "it is yet no exaggeration to say, that if we would find the quality in which we most notably excel the brute creation, we should look for it, not so much in our faculty of convincing and being convinced by the exercise of reasoning, as in our capacity for influencing and being influenced through the action of authority."[5] It is the more or less instinctive and unconscious submission of the individual to the authority of the group that alone makes human society possible. Authority in the form of administrative or executive power is a social necessity. No social group could exist without it. One cannot, therefore, deny this type of authority to the church, if the church has the right to exist at all. Every institution, if it is to be efficient, must have the power within certain limits to enforce its will upon the individual.

But there is yet another form of authority which may, for want of a better word, be described as *epistemological.* Authority in this form is not simply a guide to the immature reason or a corrective of the selfish reason but is an infallible standard of truth superior to human

[5] *The Foundations of Belief,* p. 238.

reason itself. It is, in a word, divine authority. Authority in this sense is distinctively religious, and is calculated to serve a double purpose. It tends to strengthen the power of the church as an ecclesiastical organization. The church may, as we have seen, justly claim a certain degree of authority on pedagogical and sociological grounds, but this authority is manifestly enormously augmented by the claim that the church is the custodian of infallible truth. By this claim ecclesiastical and divine authority are fused together, and a basis is thus furnished for an absolute autocracy. This deification of ecclesiasticism was repudiated by Protestantism. But in so far as the various Protestant churches based their distinctive and exclusive tenets upon an infallible book they practically claimed for themselves divine authority. The organizational weakness in their position consisted in this, that they did not, theoretically at least, claim that their own interpretation of Scripture was infallible. However confident they may have been of its correctness, they did not feel warranted in erecting upon it an ecclesiastical autocracy. Indeed, they left the door open to an extreme form of democracy such as is represented by the multitude of Protestant sects. Nevertheless, in spite of the wide divergence of opinion among Protestants with reference to the teaching of Scrip-

ture, the belief in its infallibility carried with it the conclusion that the church as an institution was divinely established. Opinions might differ as to the particular form that the ecclesiastical organization ought to take, but that the church ought to exist in some organized form was regarded as plainly taught by the Word of God.

The chief function of authority in its epistemological form, however, is to give religious certainty or assurance to the individual. Vital religious belief on the basis of purely objective evidence is difficult—indeed, impossible. We are all in our thinking sense-bound. The sense test is with us the great test of reality. Everything beyond that—the soul, God, his kingdom—is more or less vague and uncertain. We cannot grasp the unpicturable realm of spirit with the same firmness that we do the things of sense. Hence there is a felt need of some objective aid to certainty. We crave an authority on which we can lean. And we do so all the more eagerly because of the sacredness of the interests involved. There are many things about which we are content to be uncertain. It is not a matter of vital concern to us whether the various debated theories in astronomy, geology, physics, chemistry, and the other sciences are correct or not. We may be interested in them but our own lives are not seriously affected by the question

of their truth. Matters of this kind we are quite willing to leave in abeyance. But in the field of religion the situation is quite different. Here we have to do with the most sacred interests of life; we are concerned with the question of redemption and of man's eternal destiny. And when it comes to questions of this kind we crave certainty. William James says that "for practical life at any rate the *chance* of salvation is enough. No fact in human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance. The existence of the chance makes the difference . . . between a life of which the keynote is resignation and a life of which the keynote is hope."[6] In this statement there is no doubt some truth. There is a good bit of the gambler in man. It is also true that there is an immense difference between entertaining the chance of salvation and giving it up altogether. But if the religious history of mankind makes anything clear, it is that men have not been content with the mere chance of salvation. They want something more, they want assurance. It is this fact, coupled with the natural difficulty of religious belief, that has led men to seek for some objective authority to which they may appeal to settle the vexed problems of faith.

In dealing with these profound problems the

[6] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 526f.

human mind is supposed to be incompetent. It is related of Augustine that one day as he was walking along the shore absorbed in meditation he came upon a little child who with a shell was carrying water from the sea and pouring it into a hole in the sand.

"What are you doing, my child?" asked Augustine.

"I am emptying the ocean into this hole," was the reply.

"That is impossible," said the great scholar.

"Not more impossible than for you to empty the universe into your intellect," replied the child and vanished.

This story illustrates the feeling that many have had and many still have toward the ambitious efforts of the human mind to penetrate the mystery of the universe. These efforts, it is thought, are necessarily doomed to failure. Man cannot himself solve the problem of existence and of human destiny. On questions of this character philosophers have never agreed and never will agree. If we are, therefore, to be saved from skepticism, we must have supernatural guidance, some sure word of God. Only a divine revelation can give to man the assurance that he needs. And this revelation must be free from all error. If it is not, if there is in it an admixture of the human and the divine, it cannot

serve as the basis of religious certainty. For in that case it would be necessary to distinguish between the divine content and the human setting, and to do this is beyond the power of the human reason. Revelation must, therefore, be infallible, if it is to serve its epistemological function in human life. And it must also be embodied in some definite form, either that of an infallible Book or that of an infallible church, if it is to give to men the guidance and assurance they need.

Such, in substance, was the form that the doctrine of religious authority had at the beginning of the modern era. It was in this form that it came into conflict with modern science. To religious authority based on pedagogical and sociological grounds there could be no reasonable objection. But an infallible religious authority superior to science and philosophy, and even contravening them, was something that inevitably awakened opposition. Here, then, at the dawn of the modern age were two opposing forces, one based on revelation and authority, the other on reason and the autonomy of the human spirit. One of these, when carried out in a thoroughgoing way, seemed to exclude the other; yet each apparently had a certain validity. To adjust the two to each other became thus a matter of vital religious interest. Theology could not hope

permanently to defy modern science, and yet it could not surrender the idea of an authoritative revelation. Somehow it was felt a way must be found by which the latter could be retained and still due acknowledgments be made to science. How to do this was for a long time the burning question in Protestant theology, and with many it still remains a serious problem.

In order more fully to understand this problem it will be well to take a general survey of the history of biblical study. This history may be divided into two periods: the period of tradition, and the transition from the period of tradition to that of criticism. The first of these periods extends down to the Reformation, and the second from that time down to the present. We are still in the period of transition, though the free, critical attitude toward the Bible has in recent years been widely adopted by Protestants. During most of the period of tradition biblical study was dominated by the doctrine of biblical infallibility, by the allegorical method of interpretation and by the principle of ecclesiastical authority, and was, furthermore, bound up with a more or less dualistic and empiricistic type of philosophy. These different factors were not deduced one from the other. They had diverse origins. But they tended to form a logical sys-

tem. This will become evident as we briefly consider each of them.

The doctrine of scriptural infallibility was inherited from the Jews. It seems to have grown up among them during the scribal period preceding the Christian era. It formed no part of the teaching of the classical prophets. They laid no claim to absolute inerrancy. Hosea, for instance, seems to have predicted that the fall of the house of Jehu would be synchronous with the end of the northern kingdom, and yet when this did not prove to be the case he published the prophecy in its original form, evidently laying no stress on the strictly literal fulfillment of his word (1. 4). Jeremiah's earlier prophecies of doom apparently had in mind the Scythians as the instrument of Jehovah's wrath (chapters 2-6), but when the peril from this quarter faded away and the Babylonians became the threatening power in southwestern Asia the prophet did not hesitate to publish the earlier prophecies and apply them to the new foe (chapter 36). Manifestly, he laid no stress on the exact manner in which Jehovah's judgment upon Judah's sin would be fulfilled. Still more interesting is a passage in Ezekiel (29. 17-21) where it is implied that the prophet's prediction of doom upon Tyre (27. 36; 28. 19) was not fulfilled. He had expected that Nebuchadrezzar would capture the

city, but after a long siege the Babylonian king was forced to relinquish his task. So as a recompense for the failure of his campaign against Tyre he was promised Egypt as a prey. It is clear from such instances as these, and also from the general attitude of the canonical prophets toward the future, that they laid no stress on the mere letter of their messages. That they were themselves divinely inspired they had no doubt. But their inspiration was ethical, not mechanical, in nature. "As for me," says Micah, "I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (3. 8). What Micah and the other prophets were concerned about was not to record with perfect accuracy objective events in the past, present, or future, but to stir the consciences of men and to bring home to them the great moral and spiritual truths revealed to them. It was in this moral and spiritual passion that their own inspiration consisted.

But when the living word of the prophet had largely died out in Israel and the scribe had come into the ascendancy, it was only natural that a different conception of inspiration should gain currency. There was now no inner experience by which to test the prophetic consciousness, and hence the prophet's "Thus saith the Lord" was interpreted in an external way. It was supposed

that God spoke audibly to the prophets and that they simply recorded what they had heard with the hearing of the ear. Inspiration, in other words, was conceived of as dictation. This conception, it will have to be admitted, has the merit of simplicity and clearness. Everyone can understand it. In this respect it has the advantage over all other theories of inspiration. Other theories are all more or less vague and difficult of comprehension by the average mind. Verbal inspiration is a perfectly clear conception, and it has, furthermore, the advantage of guaranteeing the objective authority of Scripture. If every word of the Bible is inspired, the book is manifestly infallible, and no further question need be raised about its authority. On the other hand, if inspiration is general in character and applies only to certain ideas in Scripture, it becomes a problem to determine in what respect and to what extent Scripture is authoritative. To solve this problem we have only human reason to fall back upon, and in such matters it seems untrustworthy. Hence the uncritical mind feels the need of an infallible book. The Bible for it must be all divine or it is not divine at all. This is the way uncritical thought reasons; and so no doubt the early Jewish scribes argued, as they gradually built up their doctrine of strict biblical infallibility.

This doctrine was probably, to begin with, a spontaneous growth. It was not directly nor consciously deduced from philosophical premises. Nevertheless, it stood related to and was perpetuated by a dualistic and empiricistic type of thought. The early prophets represented God as both transcendent and immanent. This conception received its most striking and impressive expression in the trisagion of Isaiah's inaugural vision: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6. 3). The latter part of the verse expresses the idea of the divine immanence. This idea was never completely forgotten in Israel, but from the time of Ezekiel on the idea of the divine holiness or transcendence, expressed in the first part of the verse, came more and more into the foreground.[7] The God who had destroyed his own people by permitting them to be carried into exile was so great and awful a Being that the tendency was to think of him as far removed from the common life of men and from the ordinary course of events. There arose, consequently, a felt need of mediators between God and men, and the belief in angels rapidly developed.[8] Miracle also came to be regarded as the form under which God

[7] See my *Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 147ff.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 201ff.

properly manifested himself. He stood apart from the world and only on occasion intervened in its processes. A dualistic type of thought thus came into vogue. It was not wrought out into a logical system by the Jews, but its general drift and spirit were such that it readily fused with the dualistic tendency in Greek philosophy. Dualism in later Greek thought was more radical than among the Jews. It was ethical as well as metaphysical. But the general idea of an antithesis between God and the world was common to both Jews and Greeks, and from both sources it entered into early Christian theology, giving direction to it during most of the pre-Reformation period.

Metaphysical dualism distinguishes sharply between the natural order and the direct activity of God. It assumes that if God manifests himself in the world, it must be in a miraculous way. If he reveals himself in a book, the book cannot have been written as other books are. It must have been miraculously produced; and if miraculously produced, it is manifestly the direct word of God and hence infallible. The doctrine of biblical infallibility thus finds its logical support in a dualistic philosophy. It is the belief in the undivineness of the natural that leads us to assume that revelation, if real, must be miraculously mediated. If we believed in the divineness

of the natural, we might find the word of God in the Bible, even though its various books were written in much the same way as other books are. It is the dualistic antithesis of the natural and the supernatural that results in setting the Bible apart as an absolutely unique and infallible book. At first this dualistic type of thought was not clearly defined. It was only half consciously that it gave rise to the idea of biblical infallibility. But when the two ideas came to be clearly formulated, it was evident that the latter had its logical basis in the former. Biblical infallibility presupposes a dualistic philosophy, such as was dominant in the early and mediæval church.

Another philosophical underpinning of the doctrine of biblical infallibility is to be found in the empiricistic theory of thought current in antiquity. There was, it is true, in Greek philosophy a strong rationalistic tendency. Reason was distinguished from sense experience, and the primacy was assigned to reason. It was this tendency also that came into closest contact with Christian thought and most deeply influenced it. But while reason was regarded as independent of sense experience, it was not thought of as creative. Its ideas were not derived from the senses, but from somewhere, it was thought, they must have come. The human mind did not originate them. "Plato," says Windelband, "as little as

any of his predecessors, recognizes a creative activity of the consciousness, which produces its content. This is a general limit for all Greek psychology; the content for ideas must somehow be given to the soul; hence, if the ideas are not given in perception, and the soul nevertheless finds them in herself on occasion of perception, she must have already *received* these ideas in some way or other."[9] So Plato speaks of philosophical knowledge as "recollection." Reason was thought of as the passive recipient of ideas that originally came to it from without, and in this sense even Greek rationalism may be spoken of as empiricistic.

The point of chief importance for our purpose, however, is that this conception of the passivity of the human mind was applied in a heightened form to prophets and seers. "Inspired and true divination," said Plato, "is not attained by anyone in his full senses, but only when the power of thought is fettered by sleep or disease or some paroxysm of frenzy." The mind of the prophet was represented as a musical instrument upon which the Divine Spirit played. This was the common idea of inspiration in antiquity. Inspiration did not stimulate a man's natural mental powers in an extraordinary way; it suppressed them, making his mind the passive instru-

[9] *A History of Philosophy*, p. 119.

ment of an external force. A man was supposed to be inspired when the normal functioning of his mind ceased, and he spoke and acted as though possessed by some demon or spirit. In the case of true inspiration this meant that the prophet was the mere channel of the divine word, the colorless medium through which the divine message was communicated to men, a kind of phonograph or dictograph. He himself created nothing, he simply echoed the divine voice. His message, consequently, was free from all admixture of human error. It was the pure word of God and hence infallible. The complete passivity of the prophetic mind necessarily carried with it this conception of the prophetic utterances. It is, then, clear that the empiricistic theory of thought and knowledge and the dualistic metaphysics, current in antiquity, furnished both a congenial soil for the growth of the doctrine of biblical infallibility and a logical basis for it when once it had come to be generally held. These different ideas tended to form a unitary system.

But the system was soon seen to be impractical without the addition of the allegorical method of interpretation. This method seems to have had its origin among the Greeks during the fifth century B. C. They employed it in their interpretation of Homer and Hesiod. Only by such a

method could the teaching of these sacred poets be brought into harmony with later philosophy. Crude and unworthy narratives in their poems were supposed to embody and symbolize profound philosophical truths. In this way, and in this only, did it seem that true reverence for the ancient poets could be maintained in a later and more refined age. The method was in common use among the Greeks, and hence, when the Jews came into contact with Greek culture in Alexandria and elsewhere, they naturally adopted it and applied it to the interpretation of their own sacred books.

Philo, for instance, by employing this method robbed the Mosaic books almost wholly of their natural meaning, reading back into them his own philosophical and religious ideas. According to his interpretation, "the literal statement that God cast Adam into a deep sleep and made Eve of one of his ribs is fabulous; the meaning is that God took the power which dwells in the outward senses, and led it to the mind. The serpent means pleasure. . . . The five cities of the Plain are the five senses. . . . Moses is intelligence; Aaron is speech; Enoch is repentance; Noah righteousness. Abraham is virtue acquired by learning; Isaac is innate virtue; Jacob is virtue obtained by struggle; Lot is sensuality; Ishmael is sophistry; Esau is rude disobedience; Leah is patient vir-

tue; Rachel innocence."[10] Thus the concrete and living figures of the Old Testament became simply dim personifications.

The Palestinian rabbis did not carry the allegorical method to such extremes as did Philo. Their method was somewhat more mechanical in nature; but the idea underlying it was about the same. Scripture was regarded as a book of hidden meanings, whose real purport could be extracted only by fanciful devices of one kind or another. For instance, the numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew words for "Shiloh come" (Gen. 49. 10) is the same as the numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew word for "Messiah." Hence Shiloh was identified with the Messiah.[11] By such exegetical methods as these it is evident that almost any idea could be found in the Bible. Yet some such method seemed necessary to accommodate the ancient and infallible words of Scripture to the needs of a later day. Many passages in the Old Testament in their natural and obvious sense had become obsolete. Either, then, they must contain some hidden mystical meaning or they must cease to be considered infallible. Accordingly, since the latter idea was generally accepted, the former

[10] F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation,* pp. 144, 146.

[11] *Ibid.,* p. 98.

conclusion was drawn. The allegorical method of interpretation followed necessarily from the doctrine of biblical infallibility.

These two conceptions were linked together when Christianity appeared upon the scene. Christian teachers, consequently, naturally accepted them both. The allegorical method was employed by Paul (Gal. 4. 21-31; 1 Cor. 9. 9f.), and despite protests here and there became dominant in the early and mediæval church. By many it was carried to a fantastic extreme.

Augustine "tells us that the condemnation of the serpent to eat dust typifies the sin of curiosity, since in eating dust he 'penetrates the obscure and shadowy'; and that Noah's ark was 'pitched within and without with pitch' to show the safety of the church from the leaking in of heresy."[12] As regards the scriptural number forty he remarks that "forty is four times ten. Now, four, he says, is the number especially representing time, the day and the year being each divided into four parts; while ten, being made up of three and seven, representing knowledge of the Creator and creature, three referring to the three persons of the triune Creator, and seven referring to the three elements, heart, soul and mind, taken in connection with the four ele-

[12] A. D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, ii, p. 299.

ments, fire, air, earth and water, which go to make up the creature. Therefore this number ten representing knowledge, being multiplied by four, representing time, admonishes us to live during time according to knowledge—that is, to fast for forty days."[13] Again, when the psalmist says, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked" (3. 5), "Augustine asks whether anyone can be so senseless as to suppose that the prophet' would have made so trivial a statement, unless the sleep intended had been the Death, and the awakening the Resurrection of Christ."[14]

Gregory the Great, in his work on Job, says that the seven sons typify the twelve apostles, for "the apostles were selected through the sevenfold grace of the Spirit; moreover twelve is produced from seven—that is, the two parts of seven, four and three, when multiplied together give twelve."[15]

Such was the prevailing method of biblical interpretation during the long period of tradition. It owed its prevalence partly to the lack of a truly scientific and historical spirit, but chiefly to practical and dogmatic considerations. There was an urgent and compelling need that the Bible be interpreted in such a way as to meet

[13] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 298.
[14] F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 238.
[15] A. D. White, *ibid.*, ii, p. 300.

the altered conditions of a new age. It was necessary that the Old Testament be made to anticipate the teaching of the Greek philosophers, and also that it be made to preach Christ. Otherwise it would lose contact with the living thought of the church. But on the assumption of biblical infallibility such an adjustment of biblical teaching to a later date was possible only by means of the allegorical method. If Christ was to be found everywhere in the Old Testament, it was evident that the text must be allegorized; and if later Greek philosophy and theology were to be found there, it was still more evident that the text must be allegorized. The allegorical method of interpretation was the only method by which the teaching of an infallible book could be made sufficiently elastic to meet the needs of a changing and developing church.

But while the allegorical method met the practical and dogmatic needs of the early church, it had its own perils. The chief difficulty with it is that it has no fixed principles. It has no norm, no objective standard, for the guidance of the exegete. It leaves everything to the taste and whim of the individual. The inevitable result is a distracting diversity in the interpretation of Scripture. The imagination runs riot in the effort to find symbolic meanings for the multitudinous natural objects referred to in the Bible.

This, it is evident, cannot but be intellectually demoralizing. It tends to destroy the sense of veracity. But apart from this it need have no serious practical consequences for the church so long as the conclusions reached by the different interpreters are in harmony with the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Under those circumstances the church would have no reason for interfering with the perfectly free interpretation of Scripture, no matter how fanciful the interpretations in some cases might be. But let heretical ideas be supported by appeals to Scripture and the situation is at once changed. The allegorical method used by the heretic is the same as that employed by the church; the biblical argument in one case is as valid as in the other. There is, therefore, no way of convincing the heretic that his interpretation of the Bible is wrong. He justifies his conclusions by the same exegetical method as does his orthodox opponent. Both appeal to Scripture, but the allegorical method employed by both necessarily renders the appeal of each indecisive, since there is no objective means of determining in any particular case whether the method is correctly applied or not. The only way, accordingly, for the church to maintain its own unity in the face of heretical teaching is to seek by the exercise of authority to control the interpretation of the Bible. And

this it was forced to do early in its history. Gnostics and other heretics appeared in its ranks, who by allegorizing the Christian Scriptures found in them a basis for their own views. Exegetical argumentation did not and could not avail against them. Hence the church was compelled to resort to the strong arm of ecclesiastical authority. It insisted that only those interpretations of Scripture were valid that were in harmony with tradition and with its own accepted standards. By this means it curbed the heretical tendencies encouraged by the allegorical method and also moderated the exegetical license inherent in it. In no other way apparently could the unity of the church at that time have been maintained. We thus see that the principle of ecclesiastical authority in the field of biblical study was rendered necessary by the allegorical method of interpretation, that this exegetical method, in turn, grew inevitably out of the doctrine of biblical infallibility, and that the latter owed its origin and prevalence to the dualistic and empiricistic type of thought current in antiquity.

These different ideas, thus logically related to each other, were dominant during the first fifteen centuries of Christian history, and formed the controlling principles in biblical study during that long period. Counter movements were, of course, not lacking. The Antiochian school,

represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chrysostom, protested against the allegorizing of Scripture, and did what it could to bring the church back to a sane grammatical and historical method of Bible study. But the tide was too strongly set in the opposite direction for much to be accomplished. There were also currents of thought hostile to the principle of ecclesiastical authority. In spite of the power of the church Christian sentiment was at heart democratic. Jesus and Paul had taught the perfectly free relation of the soul to God, and however much this idea may have been obscured in subsequent times, it was never completely obliterated. It remained within the church as a constant protest against ecclesiastical tyranny. Furthermore, the traditional Christian belief in the supreme authority of Scripture came into conflict with the claims of the church. Formally the church not only admitted but asserted the supreme authority of the Bible. The doctrine of biblical infallibility implied it. But by reserving to itself the exclusive right of interpretation the church actually subordinated Scripture to itself. The Bible, however, could not be kept completely within the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities. It was studied by devout souls, and when a manifest disparity was seen to exist between its teaching and the life of the church, it was used as a

weapon against the principle of ecclesiastical authority. Then, too, while a dualistic philosophy was dominant in the early and mediæval church, it did not completely hold the field. People had learned from Scripture the idea of the divine immanence. God is in the world, is near men, and is near all men. In him we live, and move, and have our being. This idea is implicit in the Christian faith, and was never completely forgotten. It received frequent expression among the church Fathers, and in so far as it was understood, it inevitably tended to moderate the prevailing sharp antitheses between the natural and supernatural, the human and the divine, the laity and the priesthood, and the secular and the religious. The way was thus prepared for a less rigid conception of inspiration and a more democratic view of church authority.

But while these counter movements were operative in the early church and during the Middle Ages, they did not become militant until the time of the Reformation. Then they broke forth with revolutionary power and ushered in a new period of biblical study. This period I have called a transition era. We have not yet completely emerged from it. In it we see the gradual disintegration of that authoritarian system built up during the period of tradition.

This transitional era may be subdivided into

two periods of about two hundred and fifty years in the one case and one hundred and fifty in the other. The first was characterized by the rejection of the principle of ecclesiastical authority and the allegorical method of interpretation, and the second by the gradual abandonment of the doctrine of biblical infallibility, though the latter process has not yet been completed. The first is the period of the older Protestantism, the second that of the newer or modern Protestantism.

The keystone in the mediæval system was the principle of ecclesiastical authority. No real progress in biblical study was possible until it had been dislodged. Against it, therefore, the Reformers directed their main attack. The principle in its origin had been a sound and, on the whole, a beneficent one. It had aimed to guard the church against the encroachments of heresy, and had also served as an effective means of disciplining multitudes of untutored minds and keeping them under the sway of Christian teaching. So far as we can see, under the conditions that prevailed in the early church and during the Dark Ages, these results could not have been accomplished in any other way. The people as a whole, especially after the invasion of the Barbarians from the north, were not ready for the private and individual interpretation of the

Scriptures; and, if they had been, the allegorical method then in vogue would have rendered it impracticable. Only the strong arm of authority could in those days maintain the necessary unity of the faith. But the principle of authority, like other principles which have been beneficent in their origin, became later a source of oppression. It should, as Sabatier says, have labored "like every good teacher . . . to render itself useless." But instead it put barriers in the way of the rational development of the human mind. It interposed obstacles between the individual soul and God. It subjected men to an obsolete system of thought. It suppressed the rights of individuals. It withheld the Bible from the laity, and made a truly scientific study of it impossible. Nothing consequently remained for the progressive forces in the church, those who believed in democracy and in the supreme authority of Scripture, but utterly to repudiate the authority of Pope and councils. The Bible, they insisted, belonged to the people, and every individual had the right to interpret it according to the light that the Spirit had granted him.

But if utter confusion was to be avoided among Christian people, it was evident that the Reformers must go one step further and reject also the allegorical method of interpretation. So long as

there was an authoritative interpreter of Scripture, it was possible to restrain the allegorist, at least to the extent of keeping him within the bounds of orthodoxy. But when the idea of an authoritative interpreter was repudiated, as it was by Protestants, and when the right of the individual to interpret the Bible according to his own private judgment was asserted, there was no longer any way of controlling the allegorist. The bars were now all down. It was possible for each one to read into Scripture whatever he chose. If, then, Protestant thought was to be saved from a disintegrating individualism, it could be only by the adoption of a new method of biblical study, a method based on the commonly accepted principles of literary interpretation. Such a method would not lead to complete agreement in the interpretation of the Bible—the numerous Protestant sects are evidence of that—but it would lead to a far greater degree of uniformity than under the allegorical system. Furthermore, it is the only method consistent with a rational view of revelation. If God meant to reveal himself in a book, it is evident that the book must be intelligible to people in general, and such intelligibility is possible only in case its natural and literal meaning is accepted as the correct one. To make of the Bible a cryptogram, a book of hidden mysteries, as one does in interpreting it allegorically,

is to destroy its real revelational value. True reverence for Scripture, therefore, as well as the ecclesiastical need of uniformity in matters of doctrine, led the Reformers to reject the allegorical and adopt the grammatical-historical method of interpretation. The latter method, fortunately, had been developed by the humanists during the preceding century in their study of the ancient classics. All that Protestant scholars, accordingly, needed to do was to apply it to the study of the Bible.

In thus maintaining that the same literal method should be employed in the interpretation of Scripture as of other books and in rejecting the principle of ecclesiastical authority the Reformers made very important and far-reaching contributions to the development of biblical study. To a large extent they shattered the traditional system, but they did not completely break with it. Its fundamental assumption, that of biblical infallibility, they retained, and not only retained but gave to it a degree of emphasis that it had not previously received. The reason for this is not far to seek. The dualistic and empiricistic philosophy of earlier times had been carried over into the new period, and brought with it the belief that divine revelation, if real, must be infallible. It also brought with it the feeling that a divine and infallible authority is necessary as the

ground of religious certainty. Without such an authority men could have no sure conviction concerning the objects of faith. No adequate basis for religious belief could be found either in reason or experience. This was the common opinion of the day. Hence Protestants felt the need of an absolute objective authority to oppose to that of the church. Since the Roman Catholic Church claimed infallibility for itself, they felt it necessary to make a similar claim for the Bible. Anything less than that would have left them without adequate means of defense against their opponents. For in that day nothing short of an infallible standard of truth could serve as the rallying center of an ecclesiastical organization and as a basis of religious assurance. The Reformers accordingly were practically forced by existing conditions to adopt an extreme view relative to biblical inspiration. Luther, for instance, said that "one letter of Scripture is of more consequence than heaven or earth." At times, it is true, he expressed himself in a quite different vein; but the logic of his position, as he conceived it, pointed toward the stricter conception of Scripture, and it was this type of thought that prevailed in the Protestant churches in general. The authority of the Bible was identified with its infallibility. The two were regarded as correlative terms. One implied the other. This was

a firm conviction of the Reformation period, and it sank deep into Protestant thought, dominating biblical study for fully two centuries and a half.

It was with this conception of biblical authority that Protestant Christianity faced the modern world. Augustine's statement, that "nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of Scripture, since greater is that authority than all the powers of the human mind," was accepted as valid in the field of religion. The Bible was looked upon as a body of absolute truth, as a kind of "paper-pope," to which the human reason must submit. The inevitable result was that a sharp conflict arose between Protestant theology and modern thought. The conflict was made all the more serious by the Protestant insistence on the literal interpretation of Scripture. From the scientific point of view this hermeneutic method represented an important advance beyond the allegorical, but from the apologetic standpoint it created a difficult situation. For the literal meaning of Scripture is far less elastic than the supposed mystical or allegorical meaning, and hence its adjustment to modern thought is a much more difficut matter. One might, to be sure, take the view that no such adjustment is necessary, that, on the contrary, it is the duty of the human mind to determine the plain and natural meaning of Scripture and then submissively accept it, regardless

of its nature. But however plausible this view may be from the authoritarian standpoint, it is quite impracticable in our modern world. Reason to-day is autonomous; it acknowledges no foreign master; it cannot be coerced. The only condition on which it can recognize the authority of Scripture is the proof or conviction that scriptural teaching is itself rational. The Bible to win the modern mind must itself become modern. But to modernize the Bible and bring it into harmony with modern science was rendered peculiarly difficult by the Reformers' combination of the literal sense with verbal inspiration. This, says Inge, has been "the great weakness of Protestantism"; but it is a weakness that is capable of being remedied. And during the past hundred and fifty years Protestant thought has been busily engaged with the task of providing the remedy.

The remedy manifestly lies in a reinterpretation of the principle of authority and in a broadening of the idea of reason so as to make it include the religious nature of man. With the latter process we will deal in a later lecture. Here we are concerned with the principle of authority. Its reinterpretation will consist in detaching it from the idea of inerrancy and in giving to it a rational and spiritual instead of a coercive character. In other words, it will be reinterpreted in such a

way as not to conflict with the autonomy of the human reason. Such a reinterpretation has been rendered both necessary and possible by various developments in the modern thought world.

What first called for an abandonment of the doctrine of biblical infallibility was the conflict between the natural science of the Bible and that of modern times. Modern astronomy, geology, and biology manifestly opened up a very different world-view from that reflected in the Bible. Strenuous efforts were for a long time made to force the biblical text into harmony with the conclusions of science. The "days" of the first chapter of Genesis were lengthened into geological periods. The antediluvian patriarchs with their abnormally long lives were transformed into dynasties. The statement in Job (26. 7) that God "hangeth the earth upon nothing" was interpreted as an anticipation of the Copernican astronomy, and the saying of the Psalmist (139. 15) that his frame was "curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth" was declared to be a veiled expression of the Darwinian theory of man's descent. But such interpretations as these were clearly forced and unnatural. They did violence to the text. They were as foreign to its original meaning as were the allegorizations of the early and mediæval church. Then, too, the

process was one that never came to an end. New scientific discoveries were constantly being made, and the problem of adjustment thus became more and more complicated, until finally candor compelled theologians to admit the hopelessness of their harmonizing task. The modern thought world cannot be found in the Bible. Between the natural science of the Bible and that of our own day a choice must be made, and this for the modern man means necessarily the rejection of the belief in biblical infallibility.

Another modern development that led to the same conclusion was the science of biblical criticism. The Reformers had put biblical study on a grammatical-historical basis, but the Bible itself they set apart as a miraculously inspired book, whose origin could not be accounted for in the same way as that of other books. Its real author was the Holy Spirit. It was not, therefore, amenable to the laws that govern the composition and development of other literary works. It was *sui generis,* and could not be incorporated into a general history of literature. This conception of its character was implicit in the idea of its infallibility. But the scientific spirit of modern times could not be content to leave the Bible in such isolation. It pressed for a rational and natural explanation of its origin. At first this inquiry seemed sacrilegious, but gradually it

won its way until to-day its main conclusions are generally accepted by biblical scholars.

It was the Jewish philosopher, Benedict Spinoza (1632-77), who first outlined the program of modern biblical study. His *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) may be regarded as "the first document in the modern science of biblical criticism." In it he clearly formulated the principles that should govern a free, unbiased, and truly scientific study of the Scriptures. These principles were first applied in a comprehensive way to the history of the text and versions of the Old and New Testaments (1685, 1689) by the Roman Catholic scholar, Richard Simon (1638-1712). His work lay chiefly in the field of what is known as the "lower criticism." The so-called "higher criticism," that is, the scientific study of the biblical literature itself, its structure, sources and history, first came into vogue among Protestant scholars in Germany during the latter half of the eighteenth century. It was J. G. Eichhorn (1752-1827) who first applied the general principles of literary criticism to the entire Old and New Testaments (1780-83; 1804-12). Chief significance attaches to his work in the Old-Testament field. There he worked out and gave general currency to the documentary hypothesis relative to the structure of the Pentateuch, though the hypothesis itself he did not originate. It goes back to

Jean Astruc, a French physician (1753). As a result of Eichhorn's work and that of other German scholars interest in biblical criticism rapidly increased until it became the all-absorbing topic of theological discussion.

The year 1835 was one of special significance. In it there appeared three books that had a far-reaching influence. One was by Wilhelm Vatke (1806-82) on *The Religion of the Old Testament.* In it Vatke anticipated what is now commonly accepted as the solution of the Pentateuchal problem. Before his time De Wette (1806-07) had identified Deuteronomy with the law-book found in the Temple in 621 B. C. and made the basis of the Josianic reform. What Vatke did was to assign the Priestly Document, containing the Levitical law, to the postexilic period. This view was later taken up by Wellhausen (1844-1918) and presented in such a convincing way that most Old-Testament scholars have adopted it. The resulting conception of the origin and structure of the Pentateuch carried with it a complete reconstruction of the history of Old-Testament religion and literature. It put the leading prophets before the main body of the law and also led to the assignment of most of the Psalms and Wisdom Literature to the period after the exile. This radical change of view relative to the origin of the Old Testament left, of course, no place for

the belief in its infallibility. Indeed, it implies that considerable portions of it are unhistorical.

The other two important books published in 1835 had to do with the New Testament. One was David Friedrich Strauss' *Life of Jesus,* and the other a treatise by Christian Ferdinand Baur *On the So-called Pastoral Epistles.* These works mark the beginning of New-Testament criticism in the strict sense of the term. What had been done previously was largely preliminary in nature. Here we have for the first time a radical reconstruction of New-Testament history similar to that of the Old Testament. The conclusions, however, of Baur and Strauss have not won such wide assent as have those of Vatke and Wellhausen in the Old-Testament field. The theories of the Tübingen school, founded by Baur, relative to the origin of the New-Testament books have been to a large extent modified by later criticism in a conservative direction. But this does not mean that the traditional standpoint is any more in favor among New-Testament than it is among Old-Testament scholars. The two-source theory (Mark and Q) in the case of the synoptic Gospels is in principle as wide a departure from the traditional view as the documentary theory in the case of the Pentateuch. Doubts concerning the historicity of John's Gospel are also common, and there is a widespread skepticism with refer-

ence to the New-Testament miracles. In general, it may be said that the present attitude toward the New Testament is as free and critical as that toward the Old; and this attitude has become so general as to be virtually irresistible. "Individual subjective criticism," as Strauss says, "is a water-pipe which any boy may close for a time; objective criticism, as it is accomplished in the course of centuries, advances like a foaming current, against which all sluices and dams are powerless."[16]

Along with the development of biblical criticism, and to some extent involved in it, went the idea of evolution, which likewise has had an important bearing on the doctrine of biblical infallibility. The idea of evolution or of a progressive revelation is not altogether lacking in Scripture. We find it in the Priestly Document, and it is implied in Paul's statement that Christ did not come until the "fullness of time." But the idea was not applied in a thoroughgoing way to history until comparatively recently. When taken in a strict sense it manifestly excludes the infallibility of the Bible as a whole. If the people of Israel, like every other nation, developed from a lower to a higher state, it is evident that the revelation made to them in their earlier history could not have

[16]Quoted by Otto Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, p. 133.

represented the same high standard as that found in later times, and hence could not have been inerrant. Then, too, the idea of an infallible body of truth, such as was supposed to be contained in the Bible, would, if consistently adhered to, make real progress impossible. We would with such a revelation be hopelessly bound to the past. The Bible can be an agent of progress only if a distinction be made between the permanent and the transient elements in it. Its ideals, its fundamental principles are of abiding worth and validity. Properly applied, they contribute to progress, but only because they are capable of ever new applications to the changing conditions of human life. The concrete regulations of Scripture cannot be regarded as absolutely authoritative. If they were, the normal development of human society would be interfered with. The very idea of evolution or historical growth rules out the notion of an infallible standard of truth.

This fact together with the literary criticism of the Bible and the conflict of its natural science with that of modern times has resulted in the gradual abandonment of the doctrine of verbal inspiration and biblical inerrancy. It was not, however, simply the objective evidence in the case that brought about this result. Hobbes once said that "even the axioms of geometry would be disputed if men's passions were concerned in them";

and if so, it is hardly probable that people would have been convinced by the argument against biblical infallibility, if they had not been persuaded that their own religious interests were not endangered thereby. What has made it possible for Protestants to give up the doctrine of infallibility has been a change in their philosophy. Three items in this change may be specified.

First and foremost is the acceptance of the idea of the divine immanence. This idea has, as we have seen, a scriptural basis, and it received not infrequent expression among the church Fathers. But not until comparatively recent times did it become a basic principle in philosophy. It was Berkeley and the German idealists of a century ago who gave to it its established place in modern thought. Previous to that time theological thinking had been for the most part dualistic. It was governed by a sharp antithesis between the natural and the supernatural, and this antithesis implied that revelation is a miraculous process and hence necessarily infallible. But all this is changed by the modern doctrine of the divine immanence. God is now regarded as manifesting himself in the ordinary processes of nature as well as in miracle. Revelation, therefore, does not necessarily imply the direct and inerrant communication of divine truth to men.

The human mind in its natural state, with its natural limitations and imperfections, may serve as a channel for divine messages. God may speak to men, even though much that is transient and imperfect is bound up with the transmission of his word. Infallibility does not inhere in the idea of revelation.

Another important development in modern philosophy is the Kantian doctrine of the constitutive or creative activity of thought. According to this doctrine the mind does not passively mirror an objective order. It receives certain stimuli from without, and then builds up its own world by virtue of principles inherent in its own nature. This holds true of all our mental activity, and must apply to the prophets as well as to men in general. When the ancient seer received impulses from the Divine Spirit, we are not to suppose that he transmitted them unchanged to the world. Before they could be communicated to men it was necessary that they be mentally assimilated, transmuted into the forms of human thought, and colored by the mind's own atmosphere. In some such complex way as this our modern psychology requires us to conceive of the process of inspiration. It thus awakens a very different expectation from what the older empiricistic conception did with its stress on the passivity of the prophet's mind. With our present con-

ception of the mind as active and creative we do not expect to find the prophetic messages inerrant. Such a view is inherently improbable. Our theory of thought negates it rather than supports it. "We have," as A. E. Rawlinson says, "no more reason, *a priori,* to look for infallibility in the sphere of intellect as the result of that operation of the Divine Spirit which we call inspiration than we have to look for impeccability in the sphere of conduct, as the result of that parallel operation of the same Spirit which we call grace."[17] In both instances the human factor necessarily colors and diverts the stream of divine activity.

But not only has modern philosophy rejected the empiricistic psychology and dualistic metaphysics, that formed the background and basis of the doctrine of biblical infallibility; it has also introduced a new test of truth. The old view was that in order to be believed a proposition must either be logically demonstrated or be certified to by some absolute authority. On no other basis could it claim acceptance, and on no other ground could any leader expect his message to be accepted. "He," said John Locke, "whom anyone will pretend to set up in this kind, and have his rules pass for authentic directions, must show, that either he builds his doctrine upon principles of reason, self-evident in themselves;

[17] *Foundations* (edited by B. H. Streeter), p. 368.

and that he deduces all the parts of it from thence by clear and evident demonstration: or must show his commission from heaven, that he comes with authority from God, to deliver his will and commands to the world."[18] Of these two methods the first is manifestly impracticable in the field of religion. Religious beliefs cannot be logically demonstrated, nor are they self-evident truths. If they are to be accepted, it must be because they have been authoritatively revealed. Such was the common view in the past. Hence the doctrine of infallibility arose and maintained itself practically unchallenged down into modern times. The doctrine was supposed to be the necessary ground of religious certainty.

But since the time of Kant a new test of truth has been receiving increasing recognition. We call it the pragmatic test. According to pragmatism certainty in practical matters is based on experience, not on speculation or on some assumed external authority. "Concrete certainty in general," as Bowne says, "has a complex root in life as a whole. There is no simple and single objective standard, labeled certainty, which may be mechanically applied for the testing of truth. The living mind itself, with its interest and tendencies and furniture of experience, is the only standard; and this mind, in immediate contact

[18] *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, p. 142.

with reality, attains to certainty about many things, and ignores the skeptical challenge as an antiquated verbal contention."[19] In the case of our senses, for instance, it is evident that they sometimes deceive us. How, it might then be asked, are we to determine when to trust them and when not? To this question in the abstract there is no answer. But in actual life we solve the problem by disregarding it, by going out into the world, using our senses, and finding that they are in general reliable. And so it is also with the Bible. It is not infallible, any more than our senses are; and in the abstract it is impossible to determine what parts are divine and what not. But in actual experience the problem vanishes. We use the Bible and discover that it finds us at greater depths of our being than does any other book. It proves itself a lamp to our feet and food to our souls, and by so doing establishes its own trustworthiness. Further proof of its inspiration we do not need. Its divine character justifies itself in our experience, and it does so regardless of the question of its strict inerrancy. The latter doctrine has lost its *raison d'être*. Modern philosophy has rendered it religiously unnecessary as well as inherently improbable. Hence thinking people have gradually laid it aside as an outworn and outgrown garment.

[19] *The Immanence of God*, p. 109.

This, however, does not mean that the Bible has surrendered its claim to being the supreme authority in religion. Auguste Sabatier in a well-known book has opposed the "Religion of the Spirit" to the "Religions of Authority." But this is a mistaken antithesis. The true antithesis is that between an external and coercive authority on the one hand, and an inner and spiritual authority, on the other. The former we reject in the realm of religious belief, but the latter we cannot dispense with. The spirit of man is not sufficient unto itself; it needs light from without. In one sense "the religion of the spirit is a very important fact, but when it sets up in opposition to the religion of a book, the light that is in it is apt to turn to darkness. Individual dark lanterns never contribute much to the light of the world."[20] What the world, therefore, needs, is not the rejection of biblical authority, but a reinterpretation of it; and this is the task on which Protestant thinkers have been engaged during the past century and a half. They have been seeking to make the authority of Scripture more real and vital than ever by rationalizing and spiritualizing it. And that they have in a large measure succeeded in their aim is implied in what Sabatier himself says concerning the Bible. "It is," he says, "the book above all books, light of

[20] B. P. Bowne, *The Immanence of God*, p. 110.

the conscience, bread of the soul, leaven of all reforms. It is the lamp that hangs from the arched roof of the sanctuary to give light to those who are seeking God. The destiny of holiness on earth is irrevocably linked with the destiny of the Bible."[21] A book of which this can be truly said is certainly still our supreme authority in religion.

In actual influence the Bible has lost nothing by renouncing the claim to infallibility. Rather has it gained. The old view made extravagant claims, and "the retribution for extravagant claims is apt to be the repudiation of all claims whatsoever." Many in the past rejected the Bible altogether because of its antiquated science and its obsolete views of nature and history. Defenders of the faith unfortunately did not then realize that "the old that ages he must let go who would hold fast the old that ages not." But all this is now changed. The Bible is no longer a rock of offense to modern science. The literary fiction on which the older view of its inspiration was based has been given up. We now have a fairly adequate scientific account of its origin and history. And the ancient science imbedded in it is no longer regarded as a constituent part of its message. The old conflict, consequently, between

[21] *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, p. xxxv.

the Bible and modern science is at an end. The anti-authoritarianism of science does not stand opposed to the authority of Scripture. Both meet in the common conception of the autonomy of the human spirit, an autonomy, however, that does not exclude divine illumination. The result is that the spiritual message of the Bible has today free course in a way that it did not have heretofore. Liberated from its entanglement with extraneous and obsolete conceptions it addresses itself with new power to the hearts and consciences of men. There is an old saying to the effect that the purpose of the Bible is not to show men how the heavens go but how to go to heaven. We may not be quite satisfied with the latter part of this saying, but it at least brings out the fact that there is a religious content of Scripture that may be separated from its ancient Oriental setting and that the true purpose and abiding worth of Scripture is to be found in this content.

We are not, however, to understand this as meaning that there is, as it were, a Bible within the Bible, that is, certain definite portions, like the words of Jesus, which are to be accepted as infallible. Such a view would mean a relapse into the older form of authoritarianism. The real authority of Scripture is to be found in the realm of the spirit. It is the Spirit of God breathing through Scripture as a whole that constitutes

its divine content. This content cannot be reduced to fixed formulæ. It defies exact analysis, but it is a fact none the less, a real force, mandatory though not coercive. We recognize it especially in connection with the great characters of biblical history. Take, for instance, the prophets. "They tower like giants above their times. In the crucial periods of their people's history, when it seemed that the true religion was about to fall into ruin under the weight of moral corruption, popular superstition and heathenism, and foreign invasion, they snatched, as it were, from the very bosom of God the great truths of his righteousness, his love, his sovereignty, and armed with these, went out and smote the offenders against the moral law of God, high and low, lashed the people for their superstition and heathenism with ridicule and scorn, rebuked the craven fear of king and multitude, and hurled defiance into the teeth of the insolent invader. It is one of the most thrilling spectacles of history to observe the originality and fertility of conception, the passion of soul, and the sublimity of faith with which these lonely men on the Palestinian hills met the impending doom of their people. One cannot do so, one cannot watch them in their apparently unequal struggle with ignorance and iniquity at home and with brute force abroad without receiving a new injection of

moral heroism. It is as though the magnetic and dynamic power of these great souls somehow leaped across the chasm of these two and a half millenniums and penetrated our very being."[22]

Still more, of course, does this moral and spiritual power issue forth from Christ. In him Scripture reaches its climax, and through him it exercises its chief influence in human life. The mere fact that such a man existed is itself a matter of commanding significance in the history of mankind. "Surely," says Phillips Brooks, "it must forever stand as a most impressive and significant fact, a fact that no man who is trying to estimate the worth and strength of spiritual things can leave out of his account, that the noblest and most perfect spiritual Being the world has ever seen, the Being whom the world with amazing unanimity owns for its spiritual pattern and leader, was sure of God. I cannot get rid of the immense, the literally immeasurable meaning and value of that fact." Here we have no external coercion, but we do have a compelling logic. However we may explain it, the figure of Christ is a marvelous source of spiritual power, a power that is at once the basis of organized religion and the ground of personal assurance. To him a real and permanent authority belongs, and from him

[22]Quoted from my *Old Testament Problem,* pp. 22*f*.

it is conveyed to those sacred writings in which his image is eternally enshrined. The Bible has lost, then, for us the authority of force, but it has not lost the force of authority.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCE AS A BASIS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

If I were writing in the language of the schools, I should call this chapter "Theological Empiricism." In the preceding chapter we discussed briefly the empiricistic theory of knowledge in its relation to the doctrine of biblical authority, but here we deal with empiricism from a broader point of view. We raise the question as to whether experience can be made the basis of theology as it is of the natural sciences. Science is empirical; it rests on facts; it draws its material from observation and experiment. As against mere tradition and as against purely abstract reasoning it appeals to the authority of the senses. For *it* immediate experience is the test of truth; the real is that which is given in direct perception. It is the perceptual faculty that is the one foundation of knowledge. Reason begins with it, and to it returns for corroboration. To the scientific mind, therefore, experience is the final court of appeal; and understood in this sense empiricism is the only sound philosophy.

But "experience" and "empiricism" are both in need of more precise definition. Is experience limited to the sense world? Or is there such a thing as experience of supersensible reality? Are the sense-organs the only media for the apprehension of reality? Or might there not be "a spiritual awareness of reality beyond sense which should be a revelation that could never be judged or tested by sense"?[1] This question is manifestly one that has an important, if not a decisive bearing on the significance of empiricism for religion. The strict limitation of knowledge to sense experience would, it is clear, leave little place for religion. But if "experience" be broadened so as to include religious or mystical experience, there is no necessary reason why religion should be seriously disturbed over the empiricistic principle that knowledge is limited to experience. "Let empiricism," says William James, "once become associated with religion, as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has been associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin."[2] However this may be, it is at least evident that the empiricistic appeal to experience, broadly interpreted, contains no necessary menace to religion. The religious thinker

[1] B. P. Bowne, *The Immanence of God*, p. 75.
[2] *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 314.

may take his place alongside of the scientist and insist that religion as well as science has its basis in experience. Only by "experience" he will mean an experience that is cognitive of spiritual as well as sensuous reality. That such cognition is possible, cannot be demonstrated. But this is true of all objective knowledge. "The gist and test of all perception," as Bowne says, "is the conviction of reality that accompanies it. This can never be deduced from anything else or referred to anything else."[3] Religious perception, therefore, if real, stands in its own right just as perception in general does.

What in the past has made empiricism obnoxious to religion has been partly the fact that it sought to reduce all knowledge to sense experience, and partly the further fact that it ascribed complete passivity to the human mind. The mind was regarded as a blank tablet on which marks were somehow made from without. These marks or sensations constituted experience. The mind itself contributed nothing to experience except the bare capacity of receiving sensations. Indeed, no real substantial existence was attributed to the mind. It was described as a mere succession of mental states or was identified with the stream of consciousness. Of late there has even been a tendency to deny consciousness itself. "It is,"

[3] *The Immanence of God,* pp. 75f.

says William James, "the name of a nonentity, and has no right to a place among first principles. Those who still cling to it are clinging to a mere echo, the faint rumor left behind by the disappearing soul upon the air of philosophy."[4] It is this view that underlies behaviorism in psychology. Against it religion necessarily revolts. For religion by its very nature is interested in the soul, in its reality and permanence. It finds the real world, the world of abiding values, within us; and hence it instinctively turns away from empiricism, in so far as the latter tends to reduce the self to an unsubstantial stream or to a mere succession of passing mental states.

But empiricism does not necessarily imply such a negative view of the self, any more than it requires the restriction of experience to sense experience. No doubt a radical and thoroughgoing empiricism, which seeks to eliminate every aprioristic element from knowledge, leads inevitably to the denial of a real self, but such an empiricism would also destroy the possibility of any articulate experience whatsoever. This was made clear once for all by the work of Hume and Kant. "Experience," as Bowne says, "apart from the constitutive activity of the mind, is an elusive phantasmagoria without intelligible content. . . . Articulate experience is possible only as the mind

[4] *Essays in Radical Empiricism,* p. 2.

imposes its rational forms on the sense matter."[5] A radical and consistent empiricism is thus self-destructive. It makes impossible the very experience on which it professes to build. Professor J. H. Leuba[6] in his argument against the objective validity of religious experience charges empirical theologians with a failure to distinguish between "truly immediate experience" and "immediate experience interpreted"; and in the sense in which he means it there is some truth in the charge. But, as a matter of fact, there is no "truly immediate experience" that does not involve some element of interpretation. All articulate experience is "interpreted" experience. "Bare, raw, experience" is an abstraction; if real, it would have no intelligible content. Experience, as commonly understood, is never purely passive; it always involves the creative activity of thought. Empiricism, in so far as it denies this activity, is altogether untenable. But the term "empiricism" is often used in a broader sense to designate any theory that bases knowledge on actual experience rather than on abstract reasoning. In this sense of the term empiricism by no means excludes the reality of the self. Indeed, Borden P. Bowne called his personalistic philosophy "transcendental empiricism," by which he meant

[5] *Theory of Thought and Knowledge*, p. 346.

[6] *A Psychological Study of Religion*, pp. 234ff.

that it is the living experience of the self as over against sense experience, on the one hand, and abstract logic, on the other, that constitutes the true key to reality.

It is in this general sense of the term also that we speak of "theological empiricism." By it we mean a theology based on religious experience rather than on metaphysical speculation. Such an empiricism, it is evident, stands sharply opposed to the traditional Humian empiricism. The two agree in making experience the basis of knowledge, but they differ radically in their conception of the nature and contents of experience. Traditional empiricism reduces all experience to sense experience and denies the real existence of the self, while theological empiricism affirms both the reality of the self and the validity of religious experience. Both types of empiricism also agree in this, that they stand in a close relation to the modern scientific movement and owe to a considerable degree their vogue to it. But neither is to be identified with science. Science is empirical, but it is not "empiricistic." Empiricism is a speculative attempt to bring philosophy and theology into harmony with the supposed demands of empirical science. In carrying out this aim traditional empiricism practically eliminates theology and reduces philosophy to a theory of thought and knowledge—a theory, furthermore,

which, when carried out in a thoroughgoing and consistent way, makes both science and experience logically impossible. Theological empiricism, on the other hand, seeks to save theology either by completely differentiating its field from that of science and so rendering it immune from attack or by transforming it into an empirical science. The former method is represented by the famous Ritschlian school and the latter by such a work as that recently published by Professor D. C. Macintosh, entitled *Theology as an Empirical Science*.

These two empirical methods in theology are not mutually exclusive. In practice they to a considerable degree overlap each other. But formally they represent quite different attitudes toward science. One emphasizes the radical difference between science and theology, while the other stresses their kinship. In each of these standpoints there is more or less of truth, and there is also a certain apologetic advantage in each. But each too has its drawbacks. That theology and modern science do not naturally and readily mix is evident from their past history. No doubt the conflicts between them have in large measure been due to mutual misunderstanding and to the unwarranted encroachment of one upon the territory of the other. But this very fact implies

that the two have distinct and independent fields, and that the only way to maintain peace between them is for each to respect the rights of the other. Both, it is true, are empirical in their basis, but they deal with quite different aspects of experience. Experience is partly a registering and partly an evaluating process. These processes are not entirely independent of each other; one accompanies the other. But they represent different forms of mental activity. One is predominantly cognitive in nature, and the other predominantly affective and volitional. And of these it is the former, the cognitive or registering aspect of experience, with which science is primarily concerned, and which also forms the basis of traditional empiricism. Theology, on the other hand, has to do with experience as an affective-volitional or evaluating process. The empirical data, with which science and theology deal, are thus quite distinct from each other. And in this fact theology finds a warrant for its own independent existence and its own distinctive conclusions. Science in view of the data with which it is concerned is purely descriptive. It has to do simply with the phenomenal. It reflects an objective order, but it has nothing to say about the purpose and ultimate cause of that order. These are mysteries that only the practical reason, the affective-volitional nature of man, can penetrate.

They belong, therefore, to theology. Science in this field is wholly incompetent; and hence religion and theology are secure against attack.

There is thus an apologetic advantage in emphasizing the distinction between science and theology and in insisting on their mutual independence. In this way we apparently win for theology a storm-free port. But the method has also its disadvantages. For one thing, it leaves us with an unsatisfactory dualism. It divides the human mind against itself. It differentiates practical or religious knowledge so sharply from theoretical or scientific knowledge that the two seem to be opposed to one another. This is a view in which thought cannot rest. We need greater unity in our mental life. We cannot be content to be atheists with the head and Christians with the heart. Then, in the next place, it is urged that to base religion entirely on the practical or affective-volitional nature leads to illusionism. If religion is merely the product of our feelings and desires, it has no objective validity. Theology by adopting this method may secure its independence but only at the expense of its veracity. We need, therefore, a closer alliance between theology and science if the former is to establish itself as worthy of credence. For science, as Troeltsch says, "despite all its prematurities and errors, is still a power of

truth."[7] It carries with it the note of reality. And this is what we need above everything else in theology. We need to have the ideal world of religion and the real world of science so fused together into a consistent whole, that our total world view will be religious and yet at the same time bear the unmistakable stamp of truth.

Hence the effort has of late been made to transform theology into an empirical science. "The bulk," says D. C. Macintosh, "of what is taught in modern theological institutions is made up of science which is no longer theological and theology which is not yet scientific. . . . Systematic theology is not now and never has been an empirical science. And yet this does not mean that it cannot become a science, and that in the very near future."[8] If it should become such, there would manifestly be this advantage, that it would fall into line with the modern thought world as a whole and so have nothing to fear from that quarter. God would be regarded as a datum of religious experience very much as the material world is given in sense experience. As "the ultimate Object of religious dependence, or the Source of religious deliverance" he would be accepted as an immediate fact of consciousness.

[7] *Die Sozialphilosophie des Christentums,* p. 31.
[8] *Theology as an Empirical Science,* pp. 6, 25.

His existence would be recognized as revealed not only through the pragmatic but also through the perceptive side of experience. A purely pragmatic theology is dogmatic. It assumes that what *ought* to be, because of that very fact *is*. A truly scientific theology, however, makes no such assumption. It starts with the fact of God as something immediately given in religious experience. It sees in him not a mere postulate but an intuited and verifiable reality. This type of theology, therefore, differs from the pragmatic in that it aims to be "not a theology of mere postulates, but a theology of verified truth about reality." It admits that "appreciation of genuine religious value is an important factor in the recognition of the presence of the divine Reality"; but it insists that "the realistic apperception, or cognition of the religious Object as a real Being, causally active within the field of religious experience, is also an essential factor in religious cognition and religious common sense."[9] Hence from its standpoint God is not to be regarded as a deduction from religious experience but as a reality immediately grasped *in* religious experience. His existence is thus verifiable, capable of being established by empirical means and having the same kind of certitude as the existence of the external world.

[9] D. C. Macintosh, *ibid.*, pp. 28, 32.

Then, too, it is urged that theology would be far more fruitful in a practical way if it were to become "scientific in the full, modern sense of the term." "If this were to happen," we are told, "results of the most momentous importance might be expected." Theology might then duplicate the magnificent contributions made by the physical, mental, and social sciences to human progress, "for religion," we are reminded, "has always been a potent factor in directing human development."[10] But alluring as this prospect is, the critical theologian cannot but view it with a large measure of skepticism.

The chief objection to it is found in the fact that the religious intuitions of people, even of the mystics, are not sufficiently definite in their objective content, nor do they occur regularly enough, to be regarded as "scientific facts." So far as the average person is concerned, the divine presence is an analytic implication of his religious consciousness rather than a direct presentation comparable to the objects of sense experience. At least the latter type of religious experience is a very rare occurrence. It is for the most part confined to the mystics, and in their case, "the Entity or Power or Presence which they claim to apprehend is not verifiable in the way in which an object must be verifiable before it can become

[10]D. C. Macintosh, *ibid.*, p. 3.

a scientific object."[11] It is too vague, too incommunicable, and too esoteric in its manifestations to be a scientific fact. The experience may be valid, but its validity cannot be tested the way scientific data must be. No fact can be said to be scientific that is not "describable in terms capable of communication to all rational beings and capable of verification by all properly equipped observers." And that the experiences of the mystics do not meet these tests is generally admitted. These experiences cannot be brought about by training. They are peculiar to a very limited number of people, and even among them are apparently not subject to law but are rather instances of the wind's blowing where it listeth. As subjective psychical events these experiences are, of course, not to be questioned. In that respect they are adequately attested. But it is only in that respect that they belong to empirical science. The Object, which they profess to apprehend, lies beyond scientific demonstration. Empirical science has nothing to do with the question of the objective validity of religious experience. All it can give us is a psychology of religion; and that is what theology would be reduced to if it were to become an empirical science in the strict sense of the term.

[11] J. B. Pratt in *American Journal of Theology for 1910*, p. 190.

This criticism the empirical and scientific theologian meets by saying that "theology is related to the psychology of religion much as the physical sciences are related to the psychology of sense experience. Psychology of religion is simply a department of psychology, and psychology is the science which describes mental activity and experience as such. Empirical theology, like the physical sciences, would be a science descriptive not of experience but of an object known through experience. Psychology describes the activities of the human mind; theology is concerned with the activities of God. . . . No better reason can be given for reducing theology to the psychology of religion than can be given for reducing physics and chemistry to the psychology of sense-experience. And as we cannot maintain the physical life without acting on the assumption that our realistic intuition as to physical objects is essentially true, so neither can we maintain the religious life without acting on the assumption that our realistic intuition with reference to the divine is essentially true."[12] But plausible and striking as this analogy is, it fails to carry conviction for the reason above given. God is not a datum of consciousness in the same way that the objects of sense experience are. There are, it is true, resem-

[12]D. C. Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science*, pp. 26, 32.

blances between scientific knowledge and religious knowledge, and these may properly be emphasized. But there are also fundamental differences, and these cannot be canceled by the use of a common terminology to describe both types of cognition.

There is no doubt an apologetic advantage at the present time in being able to refer to theology as an empirical science. To do so puts it under the ægis of the great scientific movement. The feeling is thus awakened that theology has now nothing to fear from "the giant tread of the empirical sciences," for it has itself joined the procession. But in spite of this apparent union no real amalgamation between theology and science has taken place or can take place. Theology even in its empirical uniform is at heart metaphysical and always will remain such. It is, as J. B. Pratt says, "more closely related to an empirically based metaphysics than to empirical science." And since this is necessarily the case, it is doubtful if any particular benefit will accrue to theology from its arraying itself in the verbal garments of science. The current scientific phraseology and methodology may no doubt to some extent be adopted to advantage by the theologian, but on the whole it probably will be better for him to continue to speak his own language.

This, however, does not mean that theology can be or ought to be unresponsive to the empirical trend in modern thought. This trend is too strong and too well-grounded to be successfully resisted. It is broader than the scientific movement, though the latter has contributed enormously to its strength. Science has been and is the great exponent of the empirical method. But the appeal to experience is not confined to science. It has a well-established place in the philosophy of common sense. With the average man as well as with the scientist experience is the signature of reality. Popular as well as scientific thought has consequently been an important factor in promoting the empirical tendency in modern philosophy and theology. And so we find that with the breakdown of the principle of authority theology of the more vital type has usually turned to experience for its *"pou sto."* The movement was slow in coming to self-consciousness and has expressed itself in several different forms, but since the time of Schleiermacher (1768-1834) it has represented the main current in religious thought.

During the early and mediæval periods of the church's history theology did not make much of the appeal to experience. The practical value of the Christian life was, of course, appreciated, and

the mystics dwelt with enthusiasm on the superlative worth of that intimate union and communion with God which they had experienced. But systematic apologetics made little or no use of this line of evidence. This was due largely to the fact that theology during this long period was dominated by the rationalistic or speculative standpoint of Greek philosophy and by the principle of ecclesiastical authority. It was also due in part to the objective and mechanical conceptions of redemption current in the Eastern and Western churches. In the Greek church salvation was regarded as a mystical and semi-magical process effected through participation in the sacraments; it was not necessarily a matter of conscious experience. And in the Roman Church it was largely an institutional affair. The individual was saved through submission to the authority of the church. His own subjective experience was a matter of minor concern. Under those circumstances one might have supposed that stress would be laid upon the more objective side of Christian experience, the ethical and sociological value of Christianity. But conditions did not favor the employment of this line of argument. "If mediæval faith," says A. W. Benn, "found no lasting support in speculation, still less did it find a support in practice. The modern religious system of verification by conduct—what I

have called ethical ophelism—was not one whose application was desirable in those times; for from Abelard to Dante all the great writers of the Middle Ages are agreed in considering the morality of Greece and Rome as unquestionably superior to that of their own contemporaries."[13]

In our day, however, conditions in this respect have changed. Some Roman Catholic apologists now stress the fact that they ground Christianity in the objective experience of society rather than in the subjective experience of the individual. Chatterton-Hill, for instance, says: "It is according to their objective consequences for society that all religious doctrines must be judged. . . . The supreme importance of Christianity lies far more in its objective sociological value than in its subjective individual value. . . . It is time to transfer the justification of Christianity from the unstable basis of individual aspirations and individual wants, and to establish it on the sure basis of the sociological value of Christian doctrine."[14] In these utterances sociology is substituted for the Aristotelian logic and to this extent the empirical as opposed to the speculative standpoint is adopted. But otherwise we have the same objective method of justifying Christianity that we

[13] *History of English Rationalism,* i, p. 69.

[14] *The Sociological Value of Christianity,* pp. xii, 20.

find in the mediæval period, and we also have implied the same objective conception of salvation. The individual's redemption, from the Roman-Catholic standpoint, is not necessarily a conscious spiritual process, self-evidencing in character. It is, rather, an item of faith, something secondary, guaranteed by the authority of the church. It may or may not manifest itself in the form of Christian assurance; but in any case this subjective experience cannot be made the basis of the Christian faith. A more objective and stable basis is needed; and this, it is thought, can be found only in the infallible authority of the church or in that authority combined with metaphysical speculation or with sociology or with both. Such in principle is the Catholic position. It is not, then, strange that the appeal to Christian experience did not figure prominently in the apologetics of the early and mediæval church.

It was the Reformation that first made systematic use of the evidential value of Christian experience. This was due partly to the exigencies of theological controversy and partly to the new conception of salvation introduced by the Reformers. With Luther and Calvin Christianity was primarily a life, a personal and conscious experience. Salvation, as they conceived it, was not a mystical and semiconscious or subconscious

state of the soul brought about through the supernatural agency of the church and its sacraments. It was, rather, an ethical transformation, effected by the immediate activity of the Divine Spirit. It was an inward spiritual state that welled up in consciousness and that found its true content and justification in conscious experience itself. It was a present life of faith which manifested itself, not in intellectual assent to the doctrines of the church, but in active ethical and spiritual fellowship with the living God. And with such a conception of redemption it was inevitable that attention should be focused upon Christian experience as it had not been before. Then, too, the appeal to experience served the immediate needs of Protestant apologetics. Having rejected the authority of the church and put in its stead the authority of the Bible, the question arose as to what ground the Protestants had for believing that the Bible is the true Word of God. They could not in confirmation of their belief appeal, as did the Roman Catholics, to the church's authority; and so they turned to the inner witness of the Spirit. God himself, they said, so illumined the mind of the believer, that there arose within him the immediate conviction of the truth of Scripture. Parallel to this, they also held, was the fact that the believer by virtue of his experience of regeneration had within him the assur-

ance that he was a child of God. This assurance needed no external support, and in a similar way the Christian's conviction with reference to the authority of the Bible needed no ecclesiastical ratification. The truth of Scripture was guaranteed by the divinely illumined insight of the regenerate heart. Personal Christian experience thus took, in Protestant apologetics, the place previously occupied by the authority of the church.

But Protestant thought did not long remain true to its original experimental standpoint, and not till centuries later was a serious effort made to work out the full logical implications of this standpoint in the field of theology. Even during Luther's lifetime there was a tendency to transform Protestantism into a new orthodoxy, and after his death this tendency became dominant in the Lutheran church. Special stress was laid on "pure doctrine"; a new scholasticism developed; and the speculative type of apologetics was revived.

Against this deadening intellectualism there was a strong reaction in the form of Pietism, a movement that appeared in England as Puritanism and later as Methodism. This movement laid stress on vital religious experience. Spener (1635-1705) found the only true apologetic in John 7. 17: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of

God, or whether I speak of myself." And Richard Baxter (1615-1691), known as the father of English apologetic science, made much of the evidence of Christian experience. "Our present actual and habitual faith and renovation of our souls," he says, "and the sacred inclinations and actions therein contained are a standing evidence within us; as the written Word and the miracles of Christ are without us; from which we may soundly argue for the verity of Christianity, and may look on them as an infallible testimony for Christ. . . . The help which he promised in temptations, the hearing of prayer, the relief in distress—all these I have found performed; and therefore I know that the gospel is true."[15] But on the whole the pietistic movement did not contribute much to the development of theology. Its chief theological significance lay in the fact that it tended to weaken the stranglehold that an intellectualistic orthodoxy had on the church. "Whatsoever the generality of people may think," said John Wesley, "it is certain that opinion is not religion. . . . Right opinion is as distant from religion as the east is from the west. Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all; and, on the other hand, persons may be truly religious, who

[15]Vol. xx, p. 136. Quoted in *The Evidence of Christian Experience,* by L. F. Stearns, p. 393.

hold many wrong opinions."[16] This liberal attitude, however, in doctrinal matters led to no new creative principle in theology. The Methodists and Pietists in general accepted the more fundamental Christian doctrines that had come down from the past without making any serious attempt to refashion them. In their own vivid religious experience they found a verification of the truth of Christianity, but they themselves were too much absorbed in the promotion of practical piety to realize the importance of reconstructing the traditional theology and making it conform more closely with the demands of their own experimental religion. Nevertheless, in spite of its general theological sterility Pietism was the true mother-soil of modern empirical theology.

It was Schleiermacher (1768-1834), brought up in a Moravian school, who first took the empirical principle inherent in Protestantism, especially in its pietistic form, and applied it in a masterful way to the reconstruction of Christian theology. The general application of this principle to apologetics had already, as we have seen, been made by the mystics, the Reformers, and the

[16] *Works,* vol. ii, p. 20. Quoted by D. A. Hayes in *Studies in Philosophy and Theology* (p. 90), edited by E. C. Wilm.

pietists. But the argument was taken up anew and elaborated in an original and impressive way by Schleiermacher. First, he took the pietistic aversion to a dry intellectualism and a shallow moralism and justified it by an examination into the nature of religion. He showed that religion is not in its essence a kind of knowing or of doing, but something deeper than both, a kind of feeling, "the feeling of absolute dependence." This feeling is something that can be understood only in and through experience. "You must," he said to the cultured despisers of religion in his day, "transport yourselves into the interior of a pious soul and seek to understand its inspiration. . . . Otherwise you can learn nothing of religion." "Quantity of knowledge is not quantity of piety. . . . Religion is not knowledge and science, either of the world or of God. . . . In itself it is an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite, God being seen in it and it in God." "Belief must be something different from a mixture of opinions about God and the world, and of precepts for one life or two. Piety cannot be an instinct craving for a mess of metaphysical and ethical crumbs. If it were, you would scarcely oppose it." "Only when piety takes its place alongside of science and practice, as a necessary, an indispensable third, as their natural counterpart, not less in worth and splendor than

either, will the common field be altogether occupied and human nature on this side complete."[17] Schleiermacher thus confirmed by psychological analysis the conclusion instinctively reached by pietists and others before his day. He made it clear that religion is a unique element in human nature. It is independent of science and morality, and not only independent, it is equally fundamental, and therefore may justly and logically be regarded as equally trustworthy. In other words, religion is self-evidencing; it finds its justification in itself.

In the next place, Schleiermacher brought out the fact that the empirical principle in theology carries with it the conclusion that it is in the positive religions, the actual organized faiths of mankind, and in them only, that true religion is to be found. The various philosophical and ethical substitutes that men had proposed he regarded as untrue to the essential nature of religion and as of little or no value. To people inclined to indorse these substitutes he said: "The different existing manifestations of religion you call positive religions. Under this name they have long been the object of a quite preeminent hate. Despite of your repugnance to religion generally, you have always borne more easily with

[17] *On Religion; Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, translated by J. Oman, pp. 18, 35f, 31, 37f.

what for distinction is called natural religion. You have almost spoken of it with esteem. I do not hesitate to say at once that from the heart I entirely deny this superiority. For all who have religion at all and profess to love it, it would be the vilest inconsequence to admit it. . . . The so-called natural religion is usually so much refined away, and has such metaphysical and moral graces, that little of the peculiar character of religion appears. . . . Every positive religion, on the contrary, has certain strong traits and a very marked physiognomy, so that every movement, even to the careless glance, proclaims what it really is. . . . You will find, then, that the positive religions are just the definite forms in which religion must exhibit itself—a thing to which your so-called natural religions have no claim. They are a vague, sorry, poor thought that corresponds to no reality, and you will find that in the positive religions alone a true individual cultivation of the religious capacity is possible."[18] Religion, according to Schleiermacher, is social in nature. It is an historical growth. It "begins and ends with history."[19] Apart from its manifestation in the organic life of society it is a mere abstraction. It is not, then, religion in general or some modern sublimation of it, whose truth is attested by expe-

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 217.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

rience, but positive, historical religion. It is actual organized Christianity that finds its justification in itself.

But important as the foregoing considerations were from the apologetic point of view, still more significant was Schleiermacher's application of the empirical principle to theology itself. Heretofore apologists and theologians had found in experience a pragmatic justification of the traditional theology but had not used it as an instrument of theological criticism. What Schleiermacher did was to make Christian experience a norm for testing and judging the traditional doctrines themselves. Here was something new. The older theology began with the *objects* of faith. It was a *doctrina de deo et rebus divinis.* It sought to expound and establish the correct teaching concerning God and divine things on the basis of certain objective authorities, laying the main stress now on the Bible, now on ecclesiastical dogma, and now on reason. By way of contrast with this method Schleiermacher began with faith itself as a subjective experience. His theology was a *Glaubenslehre,* a science or doctrine of faith. The function of theology, as he conceived it, was to take the Christian consciousness as a text and give a scientific exegesis of it, expound its contents. In doing so one would inevitably make use of the Bible and of

ecclesiastical tradition; but they would not be accepted as external standards of truth. They would have authority only in so far as their teaching found an echo in Christian consciousness itself. According to Schleiermacher it was vital Christian experience that was the true source and norm of Christian theology. The doctrines of the past had, consequently, for him no inviolable sanctity. They were to be accepted only in so far as they stood in a direct relation to the living faith of the present. What the Christian, for instance, should think of the Trinity and of the person of Christ, was not settled once for all by the ancient creeds. These doctrines are subject to revision in the light of the Christian consciousness of to-day. And so it is also with the doctrines of the church in general. They must find both their interpretation and their validation in present Christian experience. Experience thus became with Schleiermacher an effective instrument for revising and modernizing the theology of the past.

The appeal to Christian experience, however, may be made in the interest of theological conservatism as well as theological progress. And this in a double way. First, in rough, pragmatic fashion it may be argued that the traditional theology is justified by its practical results. It is the

old, not new, theology that is militant and missionary, that promotes revivals of religion, and that carries the gospel to the ends of the earth. The common intelligence responds to the older doctrines as it does not to the modern reformulations of them. Hence such popular religious movements as Pietism in Germany and Methodism in England were theologically conservative."[20] While opposed to a rigid and lifeless orthodoxy, they resisted the rationalism of their day and also set themselves against the newer scientific tendencies in theology. And this has been true of much of the popular evangelism down to our own time. It is in connection with this movement that premillenarianism and "Fundamentalism" especially flourish.

We also find in the ritualistic churches the same tendency to justify the traditional theology on the ground of its utility. Whether this theology can be rationally defended or not, it gets hold of the people, it "works"; and hence on the basis of practical experience it may be accepted.

[20] On the relation of these two movements to each other note the following statement by A. W. Benn in his *History of English Rationalism,* i, p. 221: "The Wesleyan movement was essentially a German importation. It arose from the direction given to Wesley's thoughts by his intercourse with the Moravians, a Pietistic sect, whence it passed to the evangelical school within the Church of England."

This is a common line of argument adopted by Catholic apologists. But it is one that manifestly leaves us without a rational standard. It makes general consequences rather than reason the test of truth. It is uncritical and tends toward theological obscurantism. That there is some truth underlying it need not be denied, but this underlying truth is general in character. It applies to the validity of the religious nature as a whole rather than to that of any specific doctrinal system. To apply it to the latter is to bar the way to theological progress and to deprive the intellect of its legitimate rights in the field of religion.

But there is another and more scientific way in which Christian experience has been made the basis of theological conservatism. This method is illustrated by the so-called "Erlanger School" in Germany, represented by J. C. K. Hofmann (1802-1875), G. Thomasius (1802-1875) and Fr. H. R. Frank (1827-1894). These distinguished theologians took their start from Schleiermacher, making the Christian consciousness the source and norm of theology, but they interpreted the Christian consciousness in a somewhat narrower sense. They found its unique and distinctive element in the experience of regeneration and conversion, and out of this experience they sought to deduce almost the entire orthodox Lutheran theology.

The most complete and systematic exposition of this standpoint is found in Frank's great work, entitled *System of the Christian Certainty,* the first volume of which has been translated into English. Frank distinguishes between the "immanent," the "transcendent," and the "transeunt" objects of faith. In the first class he puts sin and the natural unfreedom of the will, habitual and actual righteousness and the spiritual freedom of the will, and the certain hope of ethical perfection and personal blessedness; in the second class we have the personal and triune God, the God-Man, and the fact of atonement; and in the third class are placed the church and the various means of grace. All of these objects of faith, according to Frank, belong to experimental religion. Those classed as "immanent" are given immediately in Christian experience, and those designated as "transcendent" and "transeunt" are implicit in it or are deducible from it. "If the spectral analysis," asks Frank, "has succeeded by dint of observing the broken light in the spectrum in pointing out to a certain extent the chemical constituents of the solar body; inasmuch as the sunlight shining around us and enabling us to see is no other than that which has beamed forth from the sun: why should it be contradictory and unfeasible to read in the spectrum of the regenerate human personality, and to recognize what that

sun is whence the rays proceed which enter there?"[21]

The theological program implied in this question is one that naturally commends itself both to the scientific temper of our age and to a warm evangelical piety. But the conclusions reached by Frank are quite out of proportion to the empirical basis upon which they are supposed to rest. The experience of regeneration and conversion as a mere psychical fact certainly cannot be regarded as the source and ground of our belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Indeed, as a purely human experience it is too unstable and too variable to furnish an adequate foundation for religious faith even in its most general form. The new birth carries with it conviction only insofar as it is itself a faith-construct; that is, only insofar as it presupposes the faith which it is supposed to ground. It is not Christian experience that creates faith, but, rather, faith that creates Christian experience. In any case the content of the Christian faith manifestly cannot be derived from a *faith*-less experience. Christian experience is itself simply the Christian faith realized and vivified. Without faith Christian experience would have no existence, and apart from experience faith would be a mere abstraction. One implies the other. To base

[21] *System of the Christian Certainty,* p. 298.

faith on Christian experience is, therefore, to base it on itself. The argument thus moves in a circle, and amounts simply to an assertion of the self-evidencing character of faith.

This also holds true in a large measure of the effort to determine the content of faith by an appeal to religious experience. To what extent the living faith of Christian experience implies the traditional theology is a question that in no small degree depends for its answer on one's own religious training and on one's consequent conception of what the normative Christian experience is. It is a defect of the "Erlanger" theology that it was based on too individualistic and too subjective a view of Christian experience. Hofmann, for instance, said, "I the Christian am to me the theologian the essential subject matter of my science."[22] This position, it is evident, does not take adequate account of the degree to which religious experience is dependent upon one's environment. The particular form that our Christian experience takes, or at least our interpretation of it, is determined to a large extent by the group to which we belong. We reflect the theological standpoint of the group, and hence it is easy for us to fall into the error of reading that theological standpoint into our own religious experience and finding in this expe-

[22] *Schriftweis*, i, p. 10.

rience the source and warrant of the theology. The experience justifies itself, and consequently is supposed also to justify the theology in connection with which it originated. But this conclusion is often drawn without a critical and scientific examination into the exact relation of the experience and the theology to each other. At any rate there can be no doubt that the experience of the individual furnishes no adequate ground for the determination of the true content of the Christian faith.

It was partly to correct this one-sided subjectivism in the empirical theology of his day that Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1899) laid so much stress on the objective and historical character of Christianity. The norm of Christian truth, he held, is to be found, not in the Christian consciousness nor in the experience of the new birth, but in revelation. Revelation, however, as he conceived it, is no external and mechanical affair. It is a living process and requires for its completion the answering faith of the human recipient. Revelation and faith are correlative terms. One implies the other. There can be no true faith without revelation, and no true revelation without faith. Vital religious experience, in other words, is an essential factor in revelation; but it is secondary, not primary. The true starting point

of theology is to be found in revelation. Here we have something lifted above the shifting experiences of the individual, and yet something positive, empirical, an objective fact that finds its echo and its verification in the history and the present experience of the church. Revelation is not, then, an independent entity of fixed dimensions. Its range and content are determined within and by experience. But the experience is that of the church rather than that of the individual; and it is derived, not original, a product of revelation as well as its conditioning ground.

In working out this conception of Christian experience and its relation to revelation Ritschl developed the famous theory of value-judgments, which we have already briefly discussed, and also sought to determine the true content of the Christian faith and the true nature of the Christian life. The program, which he outlined and to a large extent carried through, is one of the most clearly defined, one of the most original, and one of the most significant in the entire history of Christian theology. What he aimed to do was to make theology independent both of natural science and of philosophy, and at the same time to give to it and to religion an assured place in the thought and life of the modern world. In order to attain this end he naturally took his start

from Schleiermacher's conception of religion as something altogether distinct from theoretical knowledge. He developed the idea, however, and applied it to theology in an original and independent manner.

First, by the theory of value-judgments he differentiated theology from science more precisely than had heretofore been done. The bare question of fact, of existence, he held, belongs to science. With this religion is not primarily concerned. Religion moves entirely within the field of value-judgments. It is concerned with the interpretation of facts, with their significance for the human spirit. The factual order established by science does not, therefore, conflict with the interests of religion. Religion has to do simply with the purpose and meaning of the order, an aspect of reality that lies beyond the domain of science. When it comes to the question of miracle, there does, it is true, seem to be an unavoidable clash between science and religion. But here, too, religion is primarily concerned, not with the physical event, but with the meaning lying back of it. It is the revelation of God in nature that constitutes the essence of miracle from the religious point of view, and so long as the fact of this revelation is recognized in biblical history and in the world about us, the exact nature of the objective event in question

is not a matter of vital importance. Religion has, therefore, nothing to fear from science. Its own realm of values is quite independent of the conclusions reached by scientific investigation. And this realm is not like that of poetry, a mere product of the imagination. Religious values furnish as valid a basis for knowledge as does our perceptual experience. This is everywhere assumed by Ritschl. He builds on the Kantian doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason. For him and for every truly religious mind "the gleaming ideal is the everlasting real." Religious value is not an arbitrary and unreal fact; it is itself a part of the real world, and the only key to ultimate reality. This, to be sure, is an assumption, but all knowledge in the last analysis rests on assumption. In this respect religious knowledge does not differ from scientific or theoretical knowledge.[23]

In the second place, Ritschl denied to metaphysical speculation any true religious significance, and in so doing differentiated theology more sharply from philosophy than had previously been done. Philosophy, he held, cannot establish the existence of God; and even if it

[23]For a more extended discussion of this point see the author's article on "The Significance of Religious Values for Religious Knowledge," in the Methodist Review for May, 1923, pp. 341-352.

could prove an intelligent First Cause of the world, such a God would not be a real religious value. What religion demands in God is holy love; without it God would not be God. And this is an attribute that lies beyond the reach of metaphysical speculation. It is something that is revealed in history, especially in the life and death of Christ. This revelation is ultimate. It stands in its own right. It needs no philosophical props. The fact of Christ is self-evidencing; and the light that streams forth from him is only obscured by subtle inquiries into the metaphysical structure of his personality and into the ontological distinctions that may possibly obtain within the Deity. The elimination of metaphysics from theology means, therefore, not simply that the Christian religion in its essential nature is independent of philosophy, but that Christian theology has in the past to a large degree been vitiated by the unwarranted introduction of purely speculative elements drawn from philosophy, particularly the philosophy of the Greeks. The task, consequently, that confronts the theologian to-day is to purge Christian theology of its alien metaphysics and reduce it to a science founded on historical revelation. Only thus can the true independence of religion receive due recognition, and the age-long conflict between theology and philosophy be brought to an end.

In the third place, Ritschl's rejection of metaphysics not only profoundly influenced his theology; it determined to a large extent his conception of the Christian life. There is, he held, a sharp antithesis between the evangelical and the Roman-Catholic type of piety. The latter is mystical; and "mysticism," says Ritschl, "is the practice of Neo-Platonic metaphysics."[24] Metaphysics of this kind makes no distinction as regards worth between spirit and nature. It puts both on essentially the same plane; both are things. And from its standpoint the Absolute is pure being without definite content. Communion with the Absolute, therefore, takes the form of a vague mystical feeling. This feeling has no ethical content, it is not determined by the revelation of God in Christ. It grows out of the supposed immediate union of the soul with the Divine, and does not rise above the natural plane. Indeed, mysticism, as Kaftan says, is simply "spiritualized nature religion." It is independent of historical revelation. It is the kind of religious experience that springs up in the cloister. It expresses itself in passive contemplation, and rests on a false metaphysical conception of the nature of God.

Sharply opposed to this mystical Catholic type of piety, according to Ritschl, is the biblical and

[24] *Theologie und Metaphysik*, p. 27.

Protestant type. Here stress is laid on the character of God as revealed in Christ. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a very different Being from the God of metaphysical speculation; and communion with him, therefore, means something quite different also. He is a personal Being, with laws and purposes of his own and with a goal to be achieved. Communion with him, consequently, is possible only as we enter into his purposes and obey his laws. Christian experience, in other words, is essentially ethical in character. It manifests itself in active faith, in the effort to bring in the kingdom of God. This does not mean, however, that Ritschl held that there is no direct personal relation between the soul and God. "It is not to be supposed," says Herrmann, a distinguished Ritschlian, "that the difference between mysticism and our way of experiencing the communion of God is that only the mystic believes that he can feel himself inwardly grasped of God. That experience is obviously the Christian's greatest joy. . . . We differ from the mystic solely in the way in which we become aware that God is touching us. . . . Life in the Eternal is laid open to us when we understand moral necessity: and we share that life in the Eternal when we choose with joy, and of our own free will, to do what is morally necessary. The power that helps us to do this

is God."[25] There is then, according to the Ritschlians, direct communion between the soul and God, but it is a communion historically and ethically mediated. It is only through the revelation in Christ and through moral obedience that we can have true fellowship with the Divine.

In thus stressing the ethical element in religion Ritschl had in mind the numerous religious aberrations that have appeared in the course of Christian history. These aberrations he attributed to the influence of an unchristian mysticism. And it was because he saw in Pietism a revival, in Protestant garb, of Catholic mysticism that he passed such severe strictures upon it. His last great work was devoted to a history of Pietism, in which he sought to establish the thesis that Pietism does not mark an advance beyond the Lutheran Reformation nor a return to it, but, rather, a reversion to a pre-Reformation type of piety. His English biographer, Robert Mackintosh, has raised a question as to "whether engrossment in such a theme was the wisest disposal of time," and perhaps most of us would agree that it was not. But Ritschl himself regarded the theme as one of supreme importance. He thought that the very existence of Protestantism was at stake in the issue raised by Pietism. In

[25] *The Communion of the Christian With God,* pp. 196, 197.

this he was no doubt mistaken. His hostile attitude toward Pietism was due partly to his own temperament and partly to the religious conditions that prevailed in Germany in his time. There is, as a matter of fact, no such sharp antithesis between Catholic and Protestant piety as Ritschl assumed; and as for evangelical Pietism his criticism of it was, as Harnack says, "one-sided, narrow, and partisan."[26] Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in his opposition to mysticism and Pietism Ritschl set the ethical and historical element in Christianity on high as had not been done before, and thus gave to Christian experience an interpretation that links it up in a striking way with the practical and empirical temper of our day.

Ritschlianism is the most highly developed form that theological empiricism has yet taken. There is another and more recent expression of the empirical tendency in theology, to which we have already referred, which might seem to mark a step in advance, but it has not yet been sufficiently developed to take on the character of an independent and consistent theological system. Ritschl has given us the most complete, the most systematic, and the most thoroughgoing application that the empirical principle has yet received to theology. With him experience was both the

[26] *Reden und Aufsätze,* ii, p. 359.

ground and the norm of Christian truth. But experience, as he conceived it, had certain positive historical and ethical limitations. It excluded the purely mystical awareness of God. There were also in his system certain exaggerations and one-sidednesses that exposed it to hostile attack. It, furthermore, failed to take adequate account of the history and psychology of religion. But in spite of these limitations it is the most successful attempt that has yet been made to adjust Christianity to the modern empirical type of thought. It is itself, of course, not final. It was, to a considerable extent, adapted to Ritschl's own day, and hence is in some respects now obsolete. But its main principles are of abiding worth and constitute a permanent contribution to Christian thought. In a recent book, written by a Methodist theologian,[27] there is a chapter entitled "Wesley or Ritschl," the implication being that Methodists at least are under the necessity of making a choice between their denominational founder and the German theologian. "A thorough carrying out of Ritschl's principles," says this scholar, "would emasculate evangelical Christianity, especially the Methodist branch of it."[28] In this statement I am not able to concur. Be-

[27] Professor John A. Faulkner, *Modernism and the Christian Faith.*

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

tween the fundamental principle of Ritschlianism and that of Wesleyanism I see no antithesis. Rather do I see in Ritschlianism a logical though inadequate development of the empirical principle implicit in Methodism. So instead of "Wesley *or* Ritschl" I should prefer to say "Wesley *and* Ritschl."

Experience, as we have seen in the foregoing discussion, serves a double function in theology, one apologetic, the other normative. The validity of both of these functions has been called in question, especially the first. It is, for instance, contended that the psychology of religion no longer permits us to find a basis for religious belief in experience. What in the past, we are told, has made possible the apologetic appeal to experience has been the unscientific conception of religious experience current among theologians. "Their respect for experience," says James H. Leuba, "and their use of it is of a kind with that of the ignorant empiric in medicine. . . . Theology has not yet learned the lesson writ large in the history of psychology. It continues to bear to psychology a relation similar to that of alchemy to chemistry."[29] What in particular is criticized in the apologetic use of experience is the assumption that there is in religious experience in its dif-

[29] *A Psychological Study of Religion,* pp. 256, 259.

ferent forms a superhuman or miraculous element that either points to or directly apprehends a transcendent and divine reality. Indeed, it seems to be implied in Professor Leuba's discussion of the subject[30] that the entire empirical argument for religion rests upon this assumption. If, therefore, religious experience in its various forms—practical, redemptional and mystical—can be accounted for without recourse to the miraculous, the foundation of religion is by that very fact undermined. The truth of religion is thus made dependent on the question as to whether the facts of religious experience can all be explained according to natural psychological laws or not. If they can be, there is no empirical ground for believing in God. Consequently, a truly scientific psychology—one that excludes the miraculous—spells the doom of theology.

This argument is manifestly based upon a crude philosophical naturalism, but it occasionally finds support in the utterances of religious writers. For instance, in a book written about fifteen years ago by a representative theological thinker, we find this statement: "The coming battleground in theology will not be the field of speculative philosophy. . . . It will not be the field of criticism—neither literary nor historical criticism. . . . The battleground will be the field

[30] *A Psychological Study of Religion*, pp. 207-277.

of experimental psychology." In other words, according to this scholar, the vital problems in the theology of the future will be psychological. "The question," he says, "which confronts us is: Is there in Christian experience something that is beyond the explanation of purely natural laws, something really divine, something produced directly by the Spirit of God?" If this "something" cannot be discovered, theology, it is implied, will be discomfited. And at first this position would seem to be justified by our traditional evangelical phraseology. The distinction between the "natural" and the "spiritual" man, the idea of the new birth, and that of "the witness of the Spirit" would seem to point unmistakably to superhuman elements in Christian experience—elements, which, if real, ought to be capable of experimental verification. But at this point there is danger of one's falling into error through failure to distinguish between the religious and the psychological use of such terms as "natural" and "supernatural." In the psychological use of the terms stress is laid on the idea of a fixed natural order, any departure from which is "miraculous" and in that sense "supernatural" or "superhuman." In the religious use of the terms, on the other hand, "natural" denotes, not a fixed psychical order, but a certain quality of life, by way of contrast with which the higher

life of the spirit may be said to be a life above nature and in this sense a life having in it "supernatural" and "superhuman" elements. These superhuman elements, however, in Christian experience do not necessarily involve the "miraculous" in the psychological or scientific sense of the term. Conversion, the "witness of the Spirit," and the experiences of the mystic may all come about in perfect harmony with natural psychological laws, and yet may be ascribed to a divine source. The causal agency never manifests itself as such in the flow of psychic phenomena. To the "natural" eye it remains forever hidden. A psychological microscope turned upon the experiences of a saint would as little reveal God as would a telescope directed toward the heavens. The idea, that the presence of a Divine Agent in Christian experience would necessarily manifest itself in a psychological miracle is simply a relic of a crude naturalistic metaphysics. The Christian's conviction of the Divine Presence rests upon the quality of his experience and not upon its want of harmony with natural law. Such an attempt as that made by Professor Leuba to discredit theology on the ground that it is based on the unscientific assumption of a miraculous element in Christian experience, grows out of a misunderstanding of what a sound empirical theology really teaches.

Another point concerning which there has been considerable confusion among students of the psychology of religion is the relation of religious experience to faith and especially the relation of faith to mysticism. Faith and religious experience are sometimes spoken of as though they were independent entities, more or less opposed to one another. Professor Leuba, for instance, says, "If the fundamental truths of religion are either immediately given in inner experiences or induced from them, one does not see why something additional called faith should be a necessary condition of religious belief. . . . To say that it is by faith that these experiences are laid hold of and accepted seems a denial of the qualities of immediacy and unimpeachableness claimed for them."[31] This statement is a good illustration of the blindness of some psychologists to the unique character of religious experience and to the conditions of cognition in general. Faith, of course, is not something "additional" to religious experience. The two are, rather, aspects of one and the same experience. Religious experience implies faith, and faith becomes real only through religious experience. Just as sense experience has its conditioning and mediating factors, so it is also with religious experience. Religious experience has in faith its conditioning ground, and

[31] *A Psychological Study of Religion,* pp. 261, 262.

would be impossible without it. It is, therefore, a manifest error to separate religious experience from faith and treat it as an independent entity and as an independent ground of religious belief.

An analogous error appears in some of the current discussions of the relation of faith to mysticism. Here we come upon two different theories concerning religious experience. According to one all valid religious experience takes the form of faith. There are, it is said, no religious intuitions. There is no immediate apprehension of the Divine. The experiences of the mystic are illusory. "What discredits the mystic's theory," says G. A. Coe, "is that it accepts as immediate intuition what is palpably an interpretation."[32] In this statement and also in the utterances of many mystics it is apparently implied that there really is such a thing as "immediate intuition" or "immediate experience" which contains no element of interpretation. But this, as we have seen, is a mistake. It is an idea that belongs to the pre-Kantian type of thought. All experience, Kant has taught us, is interpreted experience. There is no knowledge of objective reality that is not mediated. What we call "immediate experience" in the sense world is all of it the product

[32] "The Sources of the Mystical Revelation," in the Hibbert Journal for January, 1908, p. 367.

of the mind's interpretive activity. The fact that the mystic's experience is an interpretation makes it, therefore, no less immediate and no less valid than is sense experience. Both forms of experience are interpretations, and the important thing in each case is simply the question as to whether the interpretation is correct or not. Now, in the mystical experience as well as in religious experience in general the determining factor is faith. It is not the mystical experience that creates faith but, rather, the reverse. And in this sense Professor Coe is right in saying that "the mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience; he does not derive them from it." But this by no means discredits the mystical experience, and still less does it discredit the theological beliefs. The beliefs generate the experience, but the experience in turn confirms the beliefs. Between the two there is a relation of mutual dependence. "Christian belief," as Bishop F. J. McConnell says, "is both root and fruit of Christian life."[33] The living experience of the mystic grows up out of faith, but it also vivifies and verifies the faith from which it springs. "Faith-state and mystic state are practically convertible terms."[34]

[33] *Religious Certainty*, p. 194.

[34] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 424.

It is, then, a mistake to establish a sharp line of demarcation between faith and mysticism. No doubt different types of religious experience are represented by those who stress one of these factors and those who stress the other. The faith-experience takes either the practical or the redemptional form. The latter is represented by the Pauline Epistles, and the former by the synoptic Gospels and the Epistle of James. The mystical experience, on the other hand, is commonly depicted as a simple and distinct type, but it ought, as J. B. Pratt points out,[35] to be differentiated into a milder and a more extreme form. The milder form appears in the Johannine writings, and ought to be regarded as a constituent element in Christian experience. In any case it does not stand opposed to the faith-experience, nor is this true even of the more extreme form of mystical experience. The mystical experience in all its forms, insofar as it has a definite content, either consciously or unconsciously presupposes faith; and the faith-experience, when it is vivid and coupled with a lively imagination, almost inevitably takes a more or less pronounced mystical form. That the awareness of the Divine Presence is the goal of Christian experience would probably be generally admitted. The only question is as to the way by

[35] *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 337ff.

which this goal is to be achieved. The faith-philosophy stresses the moral will; mysticism places its emphasis upon feeling. But religious feeling implies faith quite as much as does the moral will, so that in the last analysis the mystical as well as the practical type of religious experience finds its source in faith. But this by no means destroys its evidential value. For faith is its own justification. The efforts, consequently, that have been made to break the force of the apologetic appeal to religious experience by denying its immediacy and its miraculous character must be regarded as beside the mark and futile.

I just said that faith is its own justification. By this I mean that it is a basal and elementary activity of the human mind. It is, as Dean Inge says, "something deeper, more universal, more fundamental, than anything that can be assigned to the independent activities of the intellect, will, or feelings."[36] Its validity, therefore, cannot be deduced from anything else. It stands in its own right, and that right consists in "the psychological necessity which obliges us to assign values to our experience." "Faith," as Lotze says, "is the feeling that is appreciative of value"; and this feeling or instinct is rooted in human nature. It cannot be proved or disproved; it is simply an

[36] *Faith and Its Psychology*, p. 42.

elementary and ultimate endowment of the mind. It is in this fact that the true basis of the apologetic appeal to religious experience is to be found. Religious experience is the concrete expression of faith and as such shares in its self-evidencing character. It represents an independent principle in human life that in the last analysis neither needs nor can find an external support. It thus justifies itself.

To recognize this fact is by no means a confession of weakness on the part of religion, but, rather, the reverse. Rationalists naturally have difficulty in seeing this. A. W. Benn, for instance, speaks of "the principle of an inward light" as "that phosphorescence of religious belief in decay." "No rationalist," he says, "ever said more than that religious belief was a subjective illusion; and to dwell on the self-evidencing power of faith comes perilously near to an admission that the rationalist is right."[37] The very reverse, however, is the case. For religious faith to find its justification in itself is an evidence of its own strength and vitality. It is a declaration of independence on its part as over against philosophy and science, and an assertion of its own right to self-determination. This view, furthermore, cuts the ground from under the rationalistic attack upon religion. It refuses to

[37] *History of English Rationalism,* ii, p. 75; i, p. 24.

admit that there is an external rational standard by means of which the truth of religion can be judged. It insists that in and through faith we have an insight into reality deeper and truer than that afforded by the perceptive and logical faculty. Indeed, it goes a step farther. It holds that "reason" itself in the last analysis is dependent for its validity on faith. No knowledge of objective reality would be possible without faith in the intelligibility of the world and faith in our ability to understand it. This faith, however, we cannot demonstrate; we simply accept it as implicit in our mental life; all our natural science assumes it. It is, then, evident that science as well as religion holds to the autonomous validity of faith. There is a scientific faith and a moral faith as well as a religious faith. Each represents a fundamental need of the human spirit and each stands in its own right. The law actually followed by the human mind is thus stated by Bowne: "Whatever the mind demands for the satisfaction of its subjective interests and tendencies may be assumed as real in default of positive disproof."[38] This holds true in religion and ethics as well as science. The self-verifying power of faith is a fundamental principle of our entire mental life. It is not peculiar to religion; and its apologetic use by religion is not only the-

[38] *Theism*, p. 18.

oretically sound, it is an indication of religious vigor and self-confidence.

The appeal to experience as a ground of religious belief may, then, be accepted as valid. But what is to be said of experience as the norm of Christian belief? In an apt and suggestive figure Bishop F. J. McConnell has compared the method actually followed by men in the acquisition of beliefs to "the principle of eminent domain."[39] According to this political principle the government appropriates whatever piece of land or property is needed for the common good. In a similar way the spiritual needs of men lead them to appropriate whatever beliefs seem necessary to satisfy those needs and to promote the religious life. Life thus has the right of way. When it comes to religious conceptions it exercises a kind of right of eminent domain. It has always been so in the history of religious thought. Life has been the driving force. The great theological systems have primarily aimed to meet the needs of life rather than of speculation. And if so, it would seem that life or experience ought to be the norm or test of religious truth. But "life" and "experience" are by no means simple concepts. Christian experience is complex, and it is variable. It is the effect of beliefs as well as their cause. Be-

[39] *Religious Certainty,* p. 9.

tween experience and belief there is a continual interaction. Experience is the more basal of the two, but it is itself being constantly fashioned by traditional belief. To erect experience into an independent critic of belief is, then, manifestly impossible.

Nevertheless, we accept Schleiermacher's principle that theology should be a scientific exposition of Christian experience or the Christian consciousness. This ideal is one that has never been realized and probably never will be. Between Christian experience and systematic theology there always has been and always will be more or less of a parallax. Unwarranted speculative elements creep into theology, and Christian experience itself is constantly undergoing changes, so that it is necessary continually to readjust the church's theology to meet the needs of the changing Christian consciousness. The process will never be complete. Still the principle, which makes experience the norm of theology, is both valid and fruitful. It tends to keep theology and life close together. It puts a check on barren theological speculation. When, for instance, a Protestant scholastic tells us that "theology teaches that there is in God one essence, two processions, three persons, four relations, five notions, and the circumincession which the Greeks call perichoresis"—we are quite confident that

whatever other merits this theology may have, it is not empirical.

Again, theological empiricism relieves the believer of the burden of accepting traditional doctrines that stand in no living relation to the Christian consciousness of to-day. It is, to be sure, often no easy matter to decide whether a particular doctrine has value for our time or not. On points of this kind good and able men differ. But gradually in such matters the Christian consciousness makes itself felt. It draws the line between the essential and the nonessential. Outgrown beliefs it discards; old beliefs that can be reinterpreted in the life and thought of to-day it reconstructs; and those that still make a direct appeal to the human mind and heart it emphasizes anew. Thus the empirical principle, although unable to set up a definite and independent standard, proves itself to be a progressive force in theology. It surrenders nothing that is of vital importance, but it retains nothing that is a burden to the Christian conscience. At the same time it strengthens the ground of Christian certainty by locating it in life itself where it is within the reach of all and where it can be constantly renewed.

"Technically," as Bowne finely says, "our faith does not admit of demonstration. . . . But it does admit of being lived; and when it is lived, our

souls see that it is good, and we are satisfied that it is divine."[40]

[40] "Gains for Religious Thought in the Last Generation" in Hibbert Journal (1909-10), p. 893.

CHAPTER IV

REASON AS A BASIS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

This chapter might be entitled "Rationalism" or "Neo-Rationalism." It has to do with that tendency in modern thought which finds in reason rather than experience the test of truth and which judges religious belief according to its conformity or nonconformity with this standard. This does not mean that reason is necessarily opposed to experience or that it is independent of it. The two really belong together. Science, for instance, the great radiating center of our modern thought world, is both empirical and rational. It bases its conclusions both on experience and reason. Indeed, the terms "empirical" and "rational" are sometimes used interchangeably. The empirical method is said to be the only rational one, and the rationalistic standpoint, we are told, requires us to follow the lead of experience. Professor Wilm, for example, tells us that he has nowhere seen the rationalist position expressed more clearly and briefly than in the statement that "there is only one method of knowledge, that of experience

and legitimate inference from experience."[1] Rationalism and empiricism would thus seem to be fused together. And it is true, as we have already pointed out, that at the beginning of the modern era the revolt against ecclesiastical and biblical authority took the double form of an appeal both to reason and to experience. The facts of experience and the laws of reason became the ultimate standards of truth, the courts of final appeal; and to a large extent they remain such to-day. They constitute the two foci in the ellipse of modern thought.

But while there is thus a certain kinship between reason and experience, and while the two to a certain extent involve each other, there has at the same time always been a tendency to subordinate one to the other. The result has been the rise of the two opposing schools of thought, known as the empiricistic and the rationalistic. Empiricism, as we have seen, holds that experience is the sole source and ground of knowledge. Rationalism, on the other hand, contends that there are certain principles of reason that cannot be deduced from experience and that have their warrant in themselves. The conflict between these two schools goes back to the ancient Greeks; the question that divides them is one of the persistent problems of philosophy. In the course of

[1] *Methodist Review,* May, 1921, p. 342.

the long debate between them there has been much confusion of thought and much vain beating of the air. The terms "experience" and "reason" have, as a rule, not been clearly defined, and the issue consequently has often not been sharply drawn. The two schools have represented tendencies rather than fixed bodies of doctrine. But these tendencies have been significant. Each has had an important bearing on religious belief, and each has called forth an analogous movement in the field of theology. There is a theological rationalism corresponding to philosophical rationalism just as there is an empirical theology corresponding to philosophical empiricism.

In the last lecture we considered the religious problem created by modern experientialism. If experience takes the place of objective authority of every kind as the test of truth, what becomes of religious belief? Can Christianity justify itself before the bar of experience? The answer, we saw, to this question depends on the view we take of experience. Traditional philosophical empiricism so construed experience as practically to eliminate religion. It restricted cognitive experience to the sense plane and insisted that there is no experiential basis for the belief in the reality of the self. In view of these facts we can hardly agree with William James that it was "through some strange misunderstanding" that empiricism

came to be associated with irreligion. At least the misunderstanding did not consist in ascribing irreligious consequences to the traditional type of empiricism. If there was any misunderstanding, it is to be found in the empiricistic conception of experience. An "experience" that leaves no place for a real self and that denies independent cognitive value to any form of experience that rises above the sense plane, manifestly furnishes no basis for religious belief. Hume, as we have already noted, did say that "the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence," but he added that this conclusion "affords no inference that affects human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance." In other words, it furnishes no basis whatsoever for real religion. From the standpoint of Humian empiricism all mystical experience is illusory, and the beneficial effects of religion have no epistemological significance; no matter how important these effects may be, they do not establish the truth of religion. Traditional empiricism is thus in its very essence hostile to religion. Its destructive conclusions appear, as we have seen, in such a work as that by Professor Leuba on the psychology of religion. Nevertheless, the word "empiricism" has strangely not suffered the same fate as the word "rationalism." It has not fallen into disfavor

in religious circles. The *odium theologicum* has not come to be attached to it. This may perhaps be due to the conviction on the part of religious thinkers that the Humian type of empiricism is based on an arbitrary and unwarranted conception of experience, and also to the instinctive feeling on the part of religious people that religion and experience are so closely related to each other that such a word as "empiricism" ought not to be surrendered to the enemy.

In any case the effort has been made in recent years to enlarge the scope of cognitive experience and make it include both mystical and "pragmatic" experience. The most important representative of this tendency is William James. He saw in mystical states "windows through which the mind looks upon a more extensive and inclusive world"; and he also found the chief test of truth in the fact that it "works." The practical consequences of religion had, therefore, for him a very important bearing upon the question of its truth, and so also did the experiences of the mystic. Both types of experience had for him cognitive value. Empiricism, as he understood it, was thus favorable to faith and might very well "become associated with religion." Indeed, it had been associated with religion long before his time. Through the Reformers, the Pietists, Schleiermacher, the Erlanger School,

Ritschl and others it had been introduced into theology. More and more Protestant theologians for a century past have been stressing the self-evidencing power of faith. Religious experience for them justifies itself just as truly as does sense experience. Some may stress the "immediacy" of the mystical experience, and others the inferential certainty of the pragmatic type of experience, but in the end it amounts to the same thing in both cases. Bishop Thoburn, a mystic, met the arguments in favor of atheism to which he had been listening, by calmly saying that he himself had "known" God for forty years, and that these arguments consequently had no effect upon him.[2] But another man with a less vivid sense of the Divine Presence might be no less sure of God. "A sedentary life," says Nietzsche, "is the real sin against the Holy Spirit. Only those thoughts that come by walking have any value." It is through life, through walking, that we arrive at truth in the practical realm. "Act as though I were and you will know that I am" were the words from above that came at one time to a doubting soul, bringing faith and

[2]It is an interesting and significant fact that Tertullian, writing about 200 A. D., makes the statement that "the majority of men derive their knowledge of God from visions." See W. R. Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 16.

assurance. Both the conviction and the vision of God are born of life, and both are self-verifying.

Christian experience, then, is the ground of belief, and it is also its norm. It constitutes the standard by which both the beliefs of the past and the new ideas of the present are to be judged. It is thus both a progressive and a conservative force. It helps us to slough off the useless past, and it also protects us against the discordant and hostile present. Its service in both directions has been significant, but it has perhaps been greater in the direction of maintaining the uniqueness and integrity of Christianity than in that of accommodating it to its modern environment. There are in Christian thought two tendencies at work. One is concerned with establishing a synthesis of Christianity with modern culture, the other is intent on maintaining what Werner Elert calls the "diastasis" of the two, their separateness and distinctness.[3] Both of these ends have to some extent been promoted by theological empiricism, but it is especially the latter that it has encouraged. Pietism, Schleiermacher, the Erlanger School, Ritschl, all in their way have insisted on the independence of Christianity and sought to isolate it from its secular environment. They have found in Christian experience some-

[3] *Der Kampf um das Christentum seit Schleiermacher und Hegel,* p. 3.

thing unique and self-evidencing. They have, therefore, welcomed the challenge of modern thought to transfer the case of religion from the court of authority to that of experience. Christianity, they were persuaded, had nothing to fear from such a transfer. So the transfer was made, the cause was pleaded, and Christianity to-day feels itself as firmly anchored in experience as science itself. This we sought to bring out in the preceding lecture in our study of the empirical tendency in religious thought.

Now, quite different in some respects from this tendency is the appeal of modern thought to reason, which we are to consider to-day, especially in its bearing on religion.

First, it may be noted that as a philosophical theory rationalism is more favorable to religion than is empiricism. Empiricism, as we have seen, in its traditional form furnishes no basis for the belief in God or that in immortality. Rather does it tend to undermine both. It denies the reality of the self, and by its limitation of valid cognitive experience to the sense realm deprives faith in God of experimental support. A consistent philosophical empiricism of this type would thus mean the overthrow of religion. Rationalism, on the other hand, has always contended for at least the partial independence of the human reason. Locke, the empiricist, declared that there is nothing in

the intellect which was not previously in sense, to which Leibnitz, the rationalist, added "except the intellect." That is, the intellect has a nature of its own; it is not a "blank tablet." And insofar as this line of thought was developed, rationalism tended to furnish a basis for the belief in the reality and the high destiny of the self. Then, too, rationalism has usually held to the possibility of proving the existence of God. Indeed, it has elaborated imposing arguments in favor of this belief. Some, it is true, have in the name of reason denied the cogency and validity of these arguments. But rationalism has at least left the door open to them, and, as a matter of fact, they are still rendering important service in the way of maintaining religious faith.

In the next place it may be noted that in spite of the foregoing fact the term "rationalism" has fallen into disfavor among religious people as the word "empiricism" has not. An irreligious connotation has come to be associated with rationalism, so that with many to call a man a "rationalist" is about equivalent to calling him an "infidel" or even "atheist." A. W. Benn, for instance, defines rationalism as "the mental habit of using reason for the destruction of religious belief." And even among theologians "rationalism" carries with it more or less of a negative implication. This is perhaps due in part to his-

torical causes, such as the use of the term to designate the arid type of religious thought current in Germany during the latter half of the eighteenth century; but it also has its ground in the fact that reason as commonly understood stands less closely related to religion than does experience. Religion in its essential nature is an experience; the rational element in it is subordinate. Then, too, religious experience is more directly dependent on history than is reason. It draws its nourishment to a large extent from the past, and so is interested in maintaining the continuity of the faith. Without this historic continuity it would almost certainly lose its own vitality. "Religion," as Schleiermacher says, "begins and ends with history." The conscious historic life of mankind is the soil out of which religion grows. Religious experience is thus rooted in history and hence instinctively takes a reverent attitude toward it. In this respect it is conservative. Reason, on the other hand, tends to be radical. However dependent it actually may be on the past, it is not itself aware of it in the way that religion is. It is inclined to assert its independence of history and to cut loose from tradition. The result is that in the field of religion rationalism has not infrequently been a devitalizing force. It has broken that connection between religion and history which is essential

to a vigorous religious life, and consequently has itself come to be looked upon with suspicion.

A third point of contrast between rationalism and experientialism is found in the fact that, while the latter, as we have noted, is disposed to assert the "diastasis" of Christianity and modern culture, the former is favorable to a synthesis of the two. This follows naturally from what was said in the preceding paragraph concerning the different attitudes taken by reason and experience toward history. Reason is less inclined than experience to recognize the authority of the past. It also differs from experience in that it lays more stress on the general than on the particular. What it values most in a thing is not that which is peculiar to it but, rather, that which it has in common with other things. What it looks for is the law that binds things together. It is the universal element in the world in which it is interested. This is characteristic of the scientific and rationalistic type of mind as distinguished from the historical and empirical. The latter is interested in the particular and the individual. It stresses, consequently, the uniqueness of Christianity, its independence of modern culture. Rationalism, on the other hand, tries to bring Christianity into harmony with modern thought. The marvelous and miraculous in Christianity it overlooks or eliminates. What it is concerned about is to

prove the reasonableness of the Christian religion, its complete conformity with the rational standards of our own day. It thus has a levelling influence. It tends to secularize Christianity rather than to Christianize the world. At least this is the peril in the rationalistic movement. Rationalism tends to become synonymous with naturalism.

But rationalism is a complex movement. Just as "experience" and "empiricism" have various meanings that need to be distinguished, so it is with "reason" and "rationalism." It is hardly safe in clear thinking to use either term unless it be accompanied by a chaperon. As regards "reason" it is important to distinguish between the "theoretical" or "logical" and the "practical" or "moral" reason. "It is a pity," says W. R. Inge, "that we have not accepted Coleridge's distinction between reason and understanding, corresponding to the German words *Vernunft* and *Verstand,* and (less exactly) to the Greek *nous* and *dianoia* as used by the Platonists. 'Reason' would then be used for a philosophy of life based on full experience, a synthesis doing justice to the claims of the moral and æsthetic consciousness, while 'understanding' would be reserved for logical reasoning of a more abstract kind."[4] As

[4] *Faith and Its Psychology,* p. 75.

it is, "reason" is used in both senses and often with no clear discrimination between them. In the case of "rationalism" we have already made a distinction between the "philosophical" and the "theological" type; but within each of these there is also an important distinction to be made. Within philosophical or epistemological rationalism we need to distinguish between the earlier doctrine of innate ideas and the Kantian idea of the creative or constitutive activity of thought. According to the earlier doctrine there are certain ideas born within us. They are not derived from experience; they are part of the mind's original equipment. Such, for instance, is the idea of God. We do not receive it from without, we do not create it; it is innate in human reason, and derives its validity from that fact. But in this form the rationalistic theory was untenable. Psychological inquiry of the most searching character failed to find in the human mind any ideas that could be called innate in the sense in which the term is commonly understood. So this form of rationalism gave way to the Kantian. According to Kant there are no "innate" ideas, but there are in the mind certain immanent principles or categories without which experience would be impossible. These principles do not reveal themselves in consciousness; they belong to the unconscious mechanism of the soul, and yet they are essential

to consciousness. Without the categories of space, time, substance, quality, cause we could have no experience in the proper sense of the term. Experience does not create the categories, the categories create experience; and yet the categories do not exist as ideas or independent principles apart from experience. They are, rather, implicit in experience, and constitute its "formal" background. They owe their origin, however, not to sense, but to reason, and hence are a priori in character. Indeed, they form the very structure of reason, so that "rational" and "a priori" are practically synonymous terms. It is this type of philosophical rationalism that has been current since the time of Kant.

In the field of theological rationalism it is important to distinguish between intellectual or logical rationalism and ethical rationalism. These two types of rationalism are quite distinct from each other, and it is doubtful if the same term ought to be used to designate both. Yet they agree in this that they take a critical attitude toward traditional religion. In this sense the Hebrew prophets were ethical rationalists. So also were Jesus and Paul. These men sharply and sternly criticized the traditional religious ideas and customs from the standpoint of conscience. They insisted on the complete moralization and spiritualization of religion. But their method

was "intuitional" rather than "rational." What impelled them to their task was not reflection, not the logic of the situation, but a spontaneous moral urge, a spiritual fire. They were seers, not philosophers; preachers, not critics. Hence one has the feeling that there is a certain impropriety in speaking of them as rationalists. The great representative of ethical rationalism is Immanuel Kant. It was he who in the realm of speculation first championed the autonomy of the moral reason, asserted its primacy over the intellect, and made it normative in the field of religious belief. He found both the source and justification of religion in the moral nature of man, and judged the historic or positive religions almost exclusively from the ethical point of view. The result was that he did not give adequate recognition to the distinctive nature of religion, and in his own theological conclusions departed rather far from traditional Christianity. There is, therefore, a certain fitness in designating him a "rationalist." The same designation has also been applied to Ritschl, but with less justification. Ritschl did stress the ethical element in religion, and also reinterpreted Christian theology to a large extent from this standpoint; but he at the same time emphasized the distinctively religious factor so strongly and was also so manifestly anti-intellectualistic in his main tendency that it seems

inappropriate to speak of him as a rationalist, even though the term be used in an ethical sense. Rationalism carries with it a certain intellectualistic flavor and does not exist in its purity without it. Of the two forms of theological rationalism, the ethical and intellectual, it is, therefore, the latter that represents the more characteristic type. It is with it that we shall chiefly deal.

During the long authoritarian period of the church's history reason was theoretically subordinated to the authority of the church or the Bible or both, but it nevertheless played an important rôle in the theoretical defense of the faith and in its systematic elaboration. The metaphysics of this period was rationally rather than empirically grounded, and so also was its theology. Both followed the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, so far as this did not conflict with revelation. In the early Greek Church the standpoint of faith and that of reason were harmonized by a comparatively simple formula: "The Logos is the divine reason; this Logos became flesh in Christ; Christianity is, therefore, the historical manifestation of the absolute divine reason and consequently the temporal embodiment of eternal truth."[5] In the mediæval period Thomas Aquinas distinguished between "natural" truths, that may

[5] Ludwig Lemme, *Christliche Apologetik*, p. 29.

be apprehended and established by reason, and "revealed" truths that lie beyond reason but which may still be shown not to be contrary to reason. Now and then there were outbreaks of skepticism on the part of theologians. Men like Tertullian, Duns Scotus and Luther emphasized the conflict between faith and reason, and made their philosophical skepticism a ground for asserting the principle of biblical or ecclesiastical authority. But on the whole the prevailing tendency in the thought of the church during its authoritarian period was to regard reason and philosophy as the handmaid of faith and theology.

But when the idea of an objective and external standard of truth was rejected by modern thought, the situation was changed. Reason now became not only independent of faith but its rival. Revelation was subordinated to reason and theology to philosophy. This tendency is represented by theological rationalism. "Rationalism" is commonly applied in a distinctive way to the type of theology dominant in Germany during the latter half of the eighteenth century. But it may also properly be used to designate the deistic movement in England, Hegelian intellectualism, and the religious apriorism of Ernst Troeltsch and the so-called "history-of-religion" school. It is with the last-named movement that I am especially

concerned, but in order to understand it we need to recall the main facts relative to the earlier forms of rationalism.

Theological rationalism, as we have already observed, has on the whole been less favorable to historic Christianity than theological empiricism, less sympathetic with its particularism, and less inclined to acknowledge its claim to uniqueness and absoluteness. But it has in each of its forms varied greatly in the degree of its divergence from the traditional Christian faith. Some of its representatives have stood much closer to the church than others; some have been its servants and others its enemies. Among them all, however, there has been a tendency to dispute the miraculous element in Christianity, to underestimate the importance of the historical and the personal in religion, and to lay undue stress on general ideas. This tendency appears as clearly in the deistic movement as in any of the later phases of rationalism. Deism, though not confined to one country nor to any particular period of time, was most prominent in England, and that during the latter part of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. It is customary to refer to Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) as the "father" of the movement. He reduced the essential ideas in religion to five: (1) there is one supreme God; (2) it is our duty

to worship him; (3) true worship consists chiefly in virtue and piety; (4) we ought to repent of sin, and (5) there are rewards and punishments here and hereafter. These ideas were supposed to be common to religions generally and to be inherent in human reason. They were consequently accepted as the basis of natural religion, the religion of reason as opposed to revealed religion. There was later a tendency to whittle them down. Some deists, like Matthew Tindal (1656-1733), left no place for the duty of worship as distinct from the performance of duties to one's fellow men, and ignored altogether the belief in immortality. They thus practically eliminated the second and fifth articles from Herbert's creed. Indeed, some deists took such a negative attitude toward religion that it was not uncommon to speak of a man as "a deist *and* an atheist" without any consciousness of the contradiction involved in the two terms. In general, however, Herbert's five articles were regarded as the charter and creed of deism, insofar as the latter had any positive religious character.

Deism was in part a reaction against the religious wars and the bitter conflict between Christian confessions that followed the Reformation. These strifes brought with them not only religious decay but a distrust of biblical authority and a feeling of the irrationality of religion in its his-

toric form. Here were different Christian sects, all appealing to the same authoritative book and yet engaged in a most unchristian conflict with each other. This conflict was itself irrational. The very fact of its existence tended to cast discredit on the idea of "revelation" and to make timely the appeal to reason. The Bible instead of allaying discord apparently inflamed it. Must there not, then, be some principle superior to the letter of Scripture, which will enable men to distinguish between the essential and the nonessential, and so tend to compose the differences between them? And if so, where is this principle to be found if not in human reason? Such questions as these men began to ask, and in this way arose the religion of reason as distinguished from the religion of revelation. Revelation might still be accepted as a fact, but its validity was acknowledged only insofar as it agreed with reason. This was the purport of a famous work by John Toland (1670-1722) called *Christianity Not Mysterious.* It was also the thesis that underlay a still more famous work by Matthew Tindal, published in 1730 and entitled *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature.* This book was known as the "Deist's Bible." According to it "Christianity is as old as the creation only if it reechoes deism, but if it add anything to natural religion,

it is an upstart and impostor."[6] What is called revelation, therefore, contributes nothing new and is really superfluous. Our sole and sufficient guide in life is reason or the light of nature; and what was meant by reason was simply the commonly accepted ideas of the time. These ideas in the field of religion were the five announced by Herbert, more or less abbreviated. But the more attention came to be directed to these ideas, the more evident it became that they were simply an excerpt from the Christian catechism and that as independent principles they had no secure foundation either in pure experience or pure reason. Hume and Kant made this clear once for all. Deism, as a matter of fact, was from the beginning a parasitic growth. It drew its life from the historic faith which it sought to displace, and the more independent it became of this faith the more precarious became its own existence, until finally it perished through its own weakness. Its decline was hastened by the Humian and Kantian criticism and especially by the new vitality imparted to historic Christianity by the Wesleyan Revival, but apart from these external influences its decay was inevitable. As a religious movement deism was falsely grounded and never had self-sustaining power.

[6] John Cairns, *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 85.

The book by Matthew Tindal above referred to was translated into German in 1741 and served as a connecting link between English deism and German rationalism. The latter movement flourished during the second half of the eighteenth century. While akin to deism and historically related to it, it had its own distinctive character. For one thing it stood closer to the church than did English and particularly French deism. Indeed, it was distinctly a movement within the church. It was consequently more sympathetic with organized and historic Christianity. Then, too, its representatives were far more learned than the English deists. Men like J. S. Semler (1725-1791), called the "father" of German rationalism, J. G. Eichhorn (1752-1827), and H. E. G. Paulus (1761-1851) were distinguished biblical scholars —indeed, pioneers in the field of modern biblical science. They were intimately acquainted with Scripture and sought to interpret it in such a way as to commend it to the people of their own day. But in doing so they yielded more to the deistic standpoint than the Christian consciousness was prepared for. Miracles they rejected, though not with the same bluntness that some of the deists had. They tried to interpret the biblical miracles in harmony with natural laws and so continued to hold to the historic credibility of Scripture. According to Eichhorn "the falling of the walls

of Jericho represents the effect of a sudden assault, along with a shout, when the marching around six times had put the garrison off their guard; and the escape of Jonah is possibly the result of his alighting on the back of a sea monster that carried him to the shore."[7] Paulus explained the miraculous feeding of the multitude by the theory that Jesus "set those who had food the example of giving to those who had none, by doing so himself with the small portion which he had."[8] The resurrection he accounted for by saying that Jesus did not really die but had a fainting spell. Still he retained a high view of Jesus' character and mission. In his later years he once said of Jesus that he "was a wonder, though not a miracle, like a meteoric stone, coming from a higher world, and leaving its mark in this."[9]

This reverent attitude toward Jesus and toward the Bible was characteristic of German rationalism, but the movement as a whole nevertheless betrayed the same tendency to subordinate revelation to reason that we find in deism. Lessing (1729-1781) put the idea underlying this tendency into a notable statement, one that has been

[7] John Cairns, *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 183.

[8] John F. Hurst, *History of Rationalism*, p. 172.

[9] John Cairns, *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 192.

declared to be the hardest blow ever struck historic Christianity. "The accidental truths of history," he said, "can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason." Essentially the same idea was also expressed by Kant when he said that "the historical serves for illustration, not for demonstration."[10] In these statements it is implied that absolute truth exists only in the form of logically demonstrated truth or in that of necessary truths of reason. History is "accidental" and at the best an illustration or symbol of truth. Historical revelation, therefore, can have nothing final about it. It may serve as a means of education, but ultimately it is destined to be superseded by the light of reason. Reason is the only true source and ground of religion. But reason, as commonly understood, is cold, logical, utilitarian. As such it runs counter to the genius of religion. Religion is warm, enthusiastic, idealistic. Theological rationalism, consequently, became a synonym for shallowness, impotence, unbelief. It failed to meet the deepest needs of the Christian spirit, and a revolt inevitably took place in the interest of a more vital type of religious thought and life.

It was Schleiermacher who led the revolt, though he was aided by the idealistic type of

[10]See E. Troeltsch, *Das Historische in Kant's Religionsphilosophie,* pp. 131, 134.

ethics introduced by Kant. With Schleiermacher, as we have already pointed out, religion was primarily a matter of feeling, of vital experience. But hardly had he launched the new empirical theology, when another form of rationalism appeared upon the scene. Hegel (1770-1831) was a severe critic of traditional rationalism. He regarded it as superficial both intellectually and religiously. The antithesis which it had established between history and reason was from his standpoint baseless. So also was its rejection of the characteristic doctrines of Christianity such as the Trinity and the incarnation. Eighteenth-century rationalism had attempted to bring about a synthesis between religion and modern culture by surrendering the distinctive elements in Christianity. This to Hegel seemed a mistaken method. He instead sought to raise the modern thought world to the level of Christianity and to unite them both in a higher synthesis. In so doing he rendered an immense service to the Christian faith. It is to him as well as to Schleiermacher and the pietistic movement in England and Germany that we owe the reinvigoration of Christianity in the modern world after it had to a considerable extent fallen into decay. "Hegel's apology for Christianity," says Werner Elert, "is the most brilliant but also the last synthesis in heroic style that has been attempted between

Christianity and science."[11] "Hegel's philosophy of religion," he also says, "is the most exalted hymn to Christianity that was ever sung in the world of science."[12] And in its aim this is no doubt true. Nevertheless, Hegel himself introduced a new form of rationalism, which in its turn threatened to be fatal to historic Christianity. He rejected, it is true, the older antithesis between history and reason. He saw in history the unfolding of the divine reason, so that history was to him an expression of reason rather than its negation; and he saw also in Christianity the absolute religion. For him the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation were embodiments of the highest philosophic truth. The existence of the Absolute, as he conceived it, took on a trinitarian form through its externalization in the world of nature and its reestablished unity in the life of the spirit. And the goal of the universe, according to his philosophy, consisted in that perfect union of the human and the divine realized in the incarnation.

But while history in general and Christianity in particular were thus, so to speak, legitimized by the Hegelian philosophy, there were still points of kinship between Hegelianism and the older rationalism which it transcended. Both, for

[11] *Der Kampf um das Christentum*, p. 35.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

instance, held to an intellectualistic conception of religion. Hegel found the essence of religion, not in feeling, but in knowledge, "absolute knowledge"; and the earlier rationalists thought of true religion as consisting in the acceptance of a certain attenuated creed. It was the rational content of religion that both emphasized rather than its experiential and vital side. Then, again, while Hegel found in philosophy a confirmation of historic Christianity, there was, after all, implied in his apologetic a subordination of faith to reason akin to that of eighteenth-century rationalism. For Hegel faith was not self-verifying; it found its justification in philosophy. He insisted, it is true, that the content of religion and philosophy is the same and that they differ only in form. But the form that truth takes in philosophy (*Begriff*) he regarded as superior to that which it takes in religion (*Vorstellung*), and hence he held that the tendency is to translate *Vorstellung* (imaginative representation) into *Begriff* (concept) until finally religion is merged into philosophy. It is philosophy, not religion, then, that, according to Hegel, represents the ultimate *form* of truth; and the same may also be said of its *content* in spite of his protestations to the contrary. With him Christianity was the absolute religion only insofar as it expressed in a symbolic or imaginative form the essential ideas

of his own philosophy. In the last analysis it was speculation, not revelation, that constituted with him the source and test of truth.

At first the Hegelian philosophy powerfully reenforced historic Christianity. It satisfied the religious demand for objective reality more completely than did the teaching of Kant and Schleiermacher. But before long the negative elements latent in the system began to manifest themselves. Hegel had identified thought with being; this was the fundamental presupposition of his philosophy. But the identification had not been and could not be thoroughly grounded. Hence one of his disciples, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), broke the connection between the two, and treated the whole idealistic and spiritual side of Hegelianism as a subjective play of thought without counterpart in the world of reality. Christianity and religion in general he regarded as a mere illusion. Hegel had also identified the idea of the incarnation with the person of Christ, but he had done so without a thorough investigation of the historical sources. Hence it was possible for another of his disciples, David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), to disconnect the two and to seek to show that the historic Jesus was a very different being from the Christ of faith. "The Idea," he said, "loves not to pour all its fullness into one example, in jealousy toward all the rest. Only the race answers to the

Idea." Concerning the Jesus of history he tells us that we know very little, and what little we know could not be made the basis of a religion. It is the Christ of faith on whom Christianity is founded, and he is simply a creation of the Christian imagination. Christology, according to Strauss, is therefore mythology, an illusion. The sublime idea of the union of humanity and divinity is quite independent of its realization in the life of a single individual.

A somewhat less extreme position was taken by another Hegelian theologian, Alois Biedermann (1819-1885). Biedermann distinguished between the principle of Christianity and the person of Christ. Absolute predicates are to be ascribed only to the former. Yet, according to Biedermann, it was in the historic Jesus that the Christian principle of divine sonship first received clear expression, and it was through this living embodiment of it that the principle became effective in the life of humanity, so that "the significance of Jesus for Christianity as a whole is not external and accidental but internal and permanent."[13] This acknowledgment, however, of the religious importance of Jesus does not conceal the fact that in the distinction between the principle of Christianity and the person of Christ we have another instance of the subordination of

[13] *Christliche Dogmatik* (second edition), ii, p. 592.

the historical and personal to the rational and speculative. And this we cannot deny is in line with the prevailing tendency of the Hegelian philosophy, however it may differ from the master's original intention. He may have aimed at "the spiritualization of history," but the theological movement he initiated tended inevitably toward "the emancipation of the spirit from history"[14] and so toward a new type of rationalism more or less hostile to historic Christianity.

As eighteenth-century rationalism was followed by the empirical theology of Schleiermacher, so Hegelianism was succeeded by Ritschlianism. The Ritschlian theology and its immense influence down to our own time we considered in the preceding lecture. As a corrective of Hegelian intellectualism and as an effective response to scientific naturalism it rendered a signal and abiding service to Christian thought. But it had its own limitations. It tended unduly to isolate Christianity. Isolation to a certain extent is desirable and necessary, if the uniqueness and absoluteness of Christianity are to be maintained. Christianity cannot be dependent for its existence on the favor of philosophy and science; it must stand in its own right. Nor can it consent to be merged in the general religious nature of man; it must main-

[14]Werner Elert, *ibid.*, p. 117.

tain its distinctness from other religions or lose its missionary character. But this does not mean that Christian theology can afford to be indifferent to philosophy and to other religions. However independent and self-confident Christian experience may make us, we cannot blind our eyes to the fact that our faith has philosophical and historical implications that need to be defended against hostile attack. The simple believer need not concern himself with these problems, but the theologian must. It will not suffice in matters of this kind to appeal to the self-verifying power of faith. The common reason in such questions has its rights. No matter how much Christianity may desire to keep itself free from entangling alliances with metaphysics and historical science, it cannot wholly succeed in doing so. It must justify itself to the world as well as to itself. This fact Ritschl and his immediate followers did not adequately recognize. So out of what may be called the left wing of his school there arose a new movement, more disposed to take account of philosophy and particularly of the history and psychology of religion. This movement is known as the "religio-historical" or "history-of-religion" (*religionsgeschichtliche*) school. It is represented in the biblical field by such men as Herrmann Gunkel, Hugo Gressmann, and Wilhelm Bousset, and in the field of systematic the-

ology by men like Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Otto. Troeltsch is the outstanding figure in the group, and is sometimes spoken of as the systematic theologian of the movement,[15] though a few years before his death (January, 1923) he passed over from the field of theology to that of the philosophy of religion and never devoted himself to the task of working out a system of theology. He was profoundly influenced by both Ritschl and Schleiermacher, but the general tendency he represented was such that his theological position may not improperly be described as "neo-rationalism."

This latest form of rationalism, with which we are more particularly concerned in the present lecture, agrees with the older rationalism in two main respects. First, it rejects miracle and along with it all claim to exclusiveness and supernatural authority. But its reasons for so doing are somewhat different from those that obtained in the past. There is, of course, the same pressure to-day as heretofore coming from the scientific conception of the uniformity of nature. This conception is steadily gaining in strength with the progress and spread of scientific knowledge and is making the belief in miracle increasingly difficult. But aside from the psychological

[15] See *The American Journal of Theology* for 1913, p. 1.

pressure thus exerted upon us the rejection of miracle has been differently grounded from time to time. During the deistic period the world was thought of as a self-running mechanism. It had been created by God, but after that, as Carlyle says, he sat apart and simply watched it go. There was no reason why he should interfere with its orderly processes. To do so would imply a defect in the mechanism and in his own creative work. Furthermore, science was making it increasingly clear that all the facts of life can be explained by natural law. There is, therefore, no ground for believing in divine interventions. The belief is irrational. And so long as nature was regarded as sufficient unto itself, there was considerable force in this line of argumentation.

But with the rise of German idealism and the doctrine of the divine immanence the situation was changed. Nature no longer offered a barrier to the divine activity. Apart from the divine reason it had no existence. It was itself the direct expression of the divine thought. The middle wall of partition between it and the Absolute was broken down. God was in the world as its ever-present cause and ground. With this conception of the relation of God to the world introduced by modern idealism one might have supposed that the Hegelian rationalists would take a more indulgent attitude toward miracles

than had their deistic predecessors. But such was not the case. The Hegelian Absolute was a God of law. His processes were dictated by an inner and irreversible logic. The logic, it is true, was that of the spirit rather than that of a blind metaphysical necessity, but it was none the less dominated by a necessity of its own. The necessity of logic was as fixed and unalterable as was the logic of necessity. No place was, consequently, left for the miraculous. Hegelian idealism might see in the biblical miracles a spiritual meaning that deistic naturalism did not; but as actual events they were excluded as rigorously by the former as by the latter. The latter saw in them misunderstood natural events, while the former tended to regard them as myths. In both cases they were rejected because of the demands of a metaphysical system.

At present the rejection of miracles rests upon a somewhat different basis. Neo-rationalism, as represented by Troeltsch, is not necessitarian in its metaphysics; it is, rather, personalistic. But it is not on that account any less thoroughgoing in its exclusion of the miraculous; if anything, it is more so. It seeks to remove the last vestige of "supernaturalism" from biblical history and from theology. But it rests its case on the philosophy of history rather than on metaphysical theory. History, it contends, is all of one piece.

The laws that operate in it are universal. Judaism and Christianity constitute no exceptions to the rule. We cannot allow miracles in their history unless we allow them elsewhere. If we deny miracles in "profane" history, as most Christians do, we must also deny them in "sacred" history. There is no real line of demarcation between profane and sacred. Both in their outward fortunes and in their thought-life the Israelites were subject to the same laws as other peoples, and their own development both politically and intellectually was to a large degree determined by their environment. No Chinese wall shut them off from other nations. Both Judaism and early Christianity belong to the weave of universal history. They partake of its relativity. Nothing final and absolute can be found in them. Nor was it necessary that miracles be performed in those early days in order to create faith. One of the eighteenth-century deists, Thomas Chubb (1679-1747), used to argue that Methodism made converts without them, and hence primitive Christianity may have done the same.[16] To this it has been replied that the new birth is itself a miracle of grace and as such an attestation of the truth of Scripture. But on this point also neo-rationalism is equally firm in its anti-supernaturalism. It rejects the conversion-theology of the Erlanger

[16] See John Cairns, *ibid.*, p. 93.

School even more positively than it does the revelation-theology of Ritschl. In both types of theology it sees the remnant of an obsolete authoritarianism. For the neo-rationalist there is nothing either in Christian experience or in biblical history that is miraculous and hence absolutely authoritative. Human life as a whole, both objective and subjective, is of the same weave and under the same law of development. There is, therefore, no place left for exclusiveness and absoluteness on the part of Christianity. The belief in miracles belongs to the past.

A second point of agreement between the new and the old rationalism is to be found in the religious significance that both attribute to philosophy or to the natural reason, though in this respect they differ only in degree from the older orthodoxy. The importance ascribed to philosophy, particularly the philosophy of history, by Troeltsch was in the nature of a reaction against Ritschl's exclusion of metaphysics from theology and his disregard of the comparative study of religions. Herrmann went so far as to say that "it makes no difference to a Christian whether philosophically he is a materialist or an idealist." One may, in a word, be an atheist with the head and yet a Christian with the heart. But this leaves us in an impossible dualism, a dualism that is both theoretically and practically unwarranted.

Man is a unitary being, and as such what he thinks in one realm must have a bearing on what he thinks in another. Faith and reason cannot remain in perpetual discord, nor can they be completely indifferent to each other. Experience itself makes this clear. "The decisive battles of theology," as A. J. Balfour says, "are fought beyond its frontiers. It is not over purely religious controversies that the cause of religion is lost or won. The judgments we shall form upon its special problems are commonly settled for us by our general mode of looking at the universe; and this, again, insofar as it is determined by arguments at all, is determined by arguments of so wide a scope that they can seldom be claimed as more nearly concerned with theology than with the philosophy of science or ethics."[17] It is, then, a matter of vital importance to religion whether the dominant philosophy be materialistic, positivistic, or idealistic. A spiritual philosophy is a mighty bulwark of faith. No one who ever sat at the feet of a philosopher like Borden Parker Bowne could have any doubt as to the immense service which philosophy can render the Christian faith.[18] To the average mind nature is a barrier

[17] *The Foundations of Belief,* pp. 2f.

[18] See the author's article on "Bowne as Teacher and Author," in The Personalist for July, 1920, pp. 5-14.

between the soul and God. It exists in lumpish externality to all thought, and makes difficult a rational and living appreciation of the Divine Presence. But all this is changed by a personalistic philosophy. Nature from its standpoint takes on a new look. It ceases to be mere being and becomes speech. The power not ourselves is transformed from blind force to personal will. The whole universe comes to be charged with new meaning and purpose. The old contradictions and discords are removed. The ideal and real are united in one consistent view. Behold, all things are made new. It would be difficult to describe the effect which Bowne's exposition of this truth had upon those who heard him. It proved to them a veritable gospel, a deliverance from intellectual bondage. Their spirit was released from the leaden weight of a crude realism or materialism or pantheism. What the doctrine of justification by faith meant to Luther's religious life, that did a personalistic metaphysics mean to their intellectual life. It wrought for them their intellectual redemption. And what was true of Bowne has been true of other great Christian philosophers. Their work has rendered an incalculable service to faith. In recognizing this fact rationalism represents a sounder standpoint than does Ritschlianism with its positivistic bent.

Philosophy, it is true, which begins as a friend

of faith, may later become its rival. The history of rationalism furnishes illustrations of this. Deism, as its name suggests, was a theistic philosophy, but it later became not only a rival but an enemy of the Christian faith. Hegelian idealism aimed to establish the absoluteness of Christianity, but it actually subordinated religion to philosophy and in the hands of some of Hegel's followers was used either to brand all religion as illusion (Feuerbach) or to justify a distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith (Strauss) or between the principle of Christianity and the person of Christ (Biedermann) that was hostile to historic Christianity. Some of our neo-rationalists also leave us in about the same position. Bousset and Otto, for instance, base their theology on the philosophy of J. F. Fries (1773-1843).[19] According to this philosophy the fundamental ideas of religion—God, freedom, and immortality—are implications of the pure reason. Indeed, there is only one reason, the theoretical. Kant's distinction between the practical and theoretical reason was a mistake. Our basal ideas are a "necessary constituent of the one homogeneous reason." Reason demands a "necessary synthetic unity in the nature of things," and this unity can be realized only in

[19]See *Studies in Philosophy and Theology,* edited by E. C. Wilm, pp. 110-118.

the realm of spirit. God, freedom, and immortality are thus valid deductions from the nature of reason itself. They have a rational justification that lifts them above the contingency of history. Bousset, it is true, insists that these ideas are not to be regarded as the independent basis of a new religion of reason. They are, he says, "wholly abstract ideas which by themselves alone can never become vital, which, however, unconsciously or consciously—and usually unconsciously—lie at the basis of all vital religion as aprioristic elements."[20] Vital religion is a historic growth. Reason as such cannot conjure into being a religion. Yet, according to Bousset and Otto, particularly the former, it is in the theoretical reason that the basis and norm of valid religion are to be found. Religion, then, does not contain its truth in itself; it does not justify itself; it finds its justification in an abstract metaphysical system that lies outside of or underneath it. This is essentially the same conception as that which underlies the older rationalism. It makes the historical element in religion purely symbolic and secondary, and opens the road to a new natural religion. With this position Troeltsch does not agree. He spurns the idea of a religion of reason. "A religion," he says, "based on philosophy is an illusion which is dissolved when

[20] *Theologische Rundschau,* 1909, p. 439.

we see how the religious elements of philosophies were actually derived from the great historical religions, and when we observe how impotent is any religious cult which is purely individual and intellectual."[21] The philosophy of history, as represented by Troeltsch, ties religion up so closely with history that it leaves no room for a conflict between "positive" and "natural" religion. Still, in traditional religion there are, as a matter of fact, both rational and irrational factors, and it is the rational factor that is the spring of progress and the norm of religious truth. So that "reason," after all, has its place in Troeltsch's grounding of religion and in his determination of its true content. Religion, as he conceives it, does not lie beyond the reach of the common reason. This is the abiding truth of rationalism, both new and old.

We have noted two points of agreement between the new and the old rationalism: their rejection of miracle and their favorable attitude toward the philosophy of religion. But while there are these resemblances between them, there are also important differences.

For one thing, they disagree in their conception of the nature of religion. The older forms of rationalism were intellectualistic. They made re-

[21] *American Journal of Theology,* 1913, p. 10.

ligion primarily a matter of knowing. They found its essence in a creed or a general world-view. But the new rationalism has learned from Schleiermacher and Ritschl, and from the psychology and history of religion. "It is," says Troeltsch, "one of the clearest results of all history of religion and all psychology of religion that the essential thing in every religion is not dogma or idea, but worship and fellowship, living communion with God."[22]

Essentially the same view is also elaborated by Rudolf Otto in his justly famous book, entitled *Das Heilige*. This book bears the subtitle, "Concerning the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational." Otto finds the "irrational" and unique element in religion in the experience of "the holy" or the awareness of the divine. The word "holy" in its ancient Semitic sense had almost the same meaning as the word "divine," but in the course of time it took on an ethical connotation.[23] Hence in order to express as precisely as possible the primitive unmodified religious experience Otto invents the word "numinosum," deriving it from the word *numen* (divinity, or Divine Being). The "numinous"

[22] *Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben*, p. 25.

[23] See my *Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 137-153.

then is the sense of the divine. He further characterizes this unique religious sense as *"mysterium tremendum et fascinosum."* It is a feeling of mystery, awe-inspiring yet fascinating. Here, according to Otto, is something original and underived in religion. It is not a rational idea nor a perception in the strict sense of the term; it is a matter of feeling rather than knowing. Yet it has its cognitive side; it consists in an immediate awareness of a supernatural reality. It is consequently in the mystical experience that the true genius of religion expresses itself.

In this respect both Otto and Troeltsch, it may be noted, follow the lead of Schleiermacher rather than Ritschl. But the point of chief moment is that their mystical conception of religion carries with it a significant curtailment of the function of reason in religion. The older rationalism made the *idea* fundamental and the *experience* secondary: first the religious thought and then the religious feeling. But this order is rejected by both Otto and Troeltsch. Otto makes the "irrational" factor in religion as fundamental and independent as the "rational"; and Troeltsch denies to the rational factor any conscious existence anterior to its embodiment in experience. Neo-rationalism thus makes a very important concession to theological empiricism.

Another point of difference between the new

and the old rationalism is to be found in their attitude toward history. The older rationalism deliberately subordinated history to reason. To some extent this is also true of neo-rationalism. Even Troeltsch subscribes to Kant's dictum that "the historical serves only for illustration, not for demonstration"; and Bousset is quite explicit in declaring that history furnishes us simply symbols of religious truth. Jesus was such a symbol and nothing more. Whether he actually existed or not is a matter of comparative indifference. The important thing is not what he was but what he symbolized. It is the principle of Christianity, not the person of Christ, that alone is significant for faith. We need not, therefore, be disturbed by the conclusions reached by critics relative to biblical history. The most negative results would not necessarily affect true religious faith. For in reason faith has a storm-free port, sheltered from the winds of criticism. So Bousset argues. But while our neo-rationalists thus share to a considerable degree in the traditional rationalistic depreciation of history, they have a much greater appreciation of the importance of the historical and social factor in the practical religious life of men than did their predecessors. Whatever may be theoretically true of the relation of history to reason, they are agreed that actually religion must be a spontaneous historical growth. The deistic

idea of a new and independent religion of reason they altogether renounce, whether it be based on philosophy or on the common content of all religions. "This picture of a common content of all religions," says Troeltsch, "is a mistaken idea which an accurate knowledge of the history of religions completely refutes";[24] and a purely philosophical religion is wholly illusory. Rationalism cannot, therefore, set itself up as a rival of positive religion. If it is to accomplish its aim, it must "bore from within."

Then, again, it is worthy of note that while Bousset and Otto, following Fries, hold that the fundamental religious ideas can be deduced from the abstract speculative reason, Troeltsch contends that they are in a sense evolved by history. They are objectively given in the historical development of mankind and must be slowly and carefully disentangled from the empirical flow of events. How this is to be done no one can say. There is no absolute standard by means of which the normative and valid can be distinguished from the psychological and factual. But the distinction must nevertheless be made, if there is to be such a thing as religious truth. In any case, religious truth is inextricably bound up with history, and to erect it into an independent and absolute speculative system would be to deny the facts of its origin.

[24] *American Journal of Theology*, 1913, p. 10.

Religious ideas do not produce religious history; they are, rather, produced by it.

This somewhat more conservative attitude toward history manifests itself also in Troeltsch's view of Jesus. In 1910 there was published in Germany a book, entitled *The Christ Myth,* in which the author, Arthur Drews, an Hegelian, sought to disprove the existence of Jesus. It was the author's conviction that "the 'Jesusism' of historical theology is in its deepest nature irreligious, and that this itself forms the greatest hindrance to all real religious progress." In the interest of religion itself, therefore, he felt that "this romantic cult of Jesus must be combated at all costs, but that this cannot be done more effectively than by taking its basis in the theory of the historical Jesus from beneath its feet."[25]

The book caused a great stir in religious circles in Germany. Public debates on the subject were held in the larger cities, and scores of pamphlets were published dealing with the question. Virtually all properly equipped scholars rejected Drews' theory, declaring that there is no reasonable ground for doubting the historical existence of Jesus. But not a few of them took the same position as Bousset, namely, that the question is not one of vital significance to the Christian faith. Even if the existence of Jesus should be

[25] *The Christ Myth,* pp. 18f.

disproved, the idea or principle of Christianity would remain, and this, they said, is the only essential thing.

In connection with this controversy Troeltsch wrote a lecture on "The Significance of the Historicity of Jesus for Faith," in which he presented an interesting mediating theory. He admitted that in the abstract our modern Christian faith in God is not necessarily tied up with the person of Christ. Redemption, as we conceive it, is an inner work of grace wrought afresh in every soul by God. It is not, therefore, dependent upon an objective historical act. All that it implies concerning Jesus is that in him we have a true revelation of God. The important thing, however, is the revelation, not the revealer. The latter is like the scaffolding, no longer necessary after the completion of the building. He may, it is true, still serve an important function as a symbol of the truth revealed through him. But he is no integral element in faith itself; and it is conceivable that faith might continue without him. "The assertion of the nonexistence of Jesus," says Troeltsch, "is no doubt a monstrosity, and the assertion also that the main outlines of his preaching cannot be known is a gross exaggeration."[26] But the possibility at least of such conclusions as these must be admitted, and it must

[26] *Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu*, p. 4.

also be conceded that in the abstract the Christian faith in God is detachable from the person of Christ. "It is," says Troeltsch, "the inner victory of our souls wrought through the greatness of the prophetic-Christian faith in God that brings about the recognition of Jesus rather than the reverse."[27]

But while Troeltsch conceded as much as this to the position taken by Bousset and others, he was even more emphatic in insisting that organized Christianity cannot exist without the belief in the historicity of Jesus. If this belief were given up, Christianity would certainly disintegrate. This conclusion he based not on any christological dogma but on a socio-psychological law. Religion, he says, is primarily not a creed but a social institution. It consists not in a dogma or an idea but in worship and fellowship; and these spiritual religions are possible only insofar as they have a center in some prophetic personality. In the lower natural religions nationality or tribal feeling may serve as a uniting bond. But in the higher faiths worship and fellowship must find their organizing center in a person. It is so with Christianity. History makes this perfectly clear. Without Christ there would be no Christianity. "So long as there is a Christianity in any sense whatsoever, it will be bound up with

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 14f.

the central position of Christ in worship."[28] In other words it will be Christocentric. There is not the slightest ground for believing that religion will ever be purely individualistic in the sense of dispensing with public worship and fellowship. And there is also not the slightest ground for believing that in our Western civilization Jesus will ever be displaced from the position of religious supremacy which he now occupies. His "heartbeat goes through and through the whole of Christendom just as the vibrating of the ship's engine can be felt in every corner of a great vessel."[29] In the religious field his leadership is practically undisputed, and such it will continue to be so long as religion remains a vital interest in our Western world. The significance attached to him will wax and wane with the growth and decline of religion. The two in our civilization belong indissolubly together. For us it is "either Christ or no one."

We thus have in Troeltsch's christology an interesting parallel to Kant's treatment of the belief in God. In the *Critique of the Pure Reason* the great Königsberger apparently demolished the theistic faith, but in the *Critique of the Practical Reason* he restored it. So Troeltsch from the standpoint of abstract speculation eliminates

[28] *Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu,* p. 29.
[29] Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften,* ii, p. 847.

Christ as a constituent factor in our religious faith, but in his religious sociology he reinstates him in a place of central importance. He affirms on the basis of a socio-psychological law that Christ is essential to vital and organized religion in our Western world. The christology which was rejected as theoretically unsound is thus made practically valid. The church as a living institution, we are told, implies and requires it. This does not necessarily mean that Christianity is the absolute religion. On this point Troeltsch's philosophy of history did not permit him to go so far as Hegel. What may happen in the distant future we do not know. It is possible that our Western civilization may be overthrown, and in that case, according to Troeltsch, religion would probably find a new center. For the present, however, Christianity is the highest form of religion, and it will remain such so long as our American-European culture survives. Christianity, to be sure, is itself no fixed entity. It is subject to the law of change. Its essence varies from age to age. Still, it has its permanent center in Christ, and the Christian religious faith may be defined as "faith in the divine regeneration of man who is alienated from God—a regeneration effected through the knowledge of God in Christ."[30] In this definition no christological

[30] *American Journal of Theology*, 1913, p. 13.

dogma is implied. The law by which the religious supremacy of Christ has been established applies to other religious founders as well. We cannot, therefore, according to Troeltsch, claim for him absolute uniqueness, or Deity in the proper sense of the term.

But in this connection the question naturally arises as to whether the socio-psychological law invoked by Troeltsch could have resulted in making Christ the living center of the Christian religion if this position had not been warranted by his own personality. There are those who say that it is a mere accident that our religion is called Christianity, just as it is an accident that this country is called America. As this country might more properly be called Columbia, so our religion might more accurately be called Paulanity. In any case Christ stands in no integral relation to the Christian faith. That his name has become the symbol of the highest religious truth is accidental. It has no adequate ground in historic reality. Faith might as well have "pitched" on some other man as its ideal. In any event Jesus is not essential to Christianity, and it is not a matter of vital importance whether he ever lived or not. This position, as we have seen, Troeltsch emphatically repudiates. Christianity for him is founded on historic fact. He sees in Jesus "the highest revelation of God ac-

cessible to us."[31] But how is this fact to be accounted for? Troeltsch's theory makes it clear that the "fact" of Christ is essential to the Christian faith, but leaves the fact itself a mystery. What he, therefore, really does is simply to push the christological problem one step further back. He does, however, tie up Christianity indissolubly with historical reality. And he also holds that historical reality is something that must be determined by scientific means. "Faith," he says, "can interpret facts but not establish them."[32] Christianity is, therefore, necessarily dependent to some extent upon the results of historical research. It cannot dispense with historical facts without destroying itself; and it cannot by any subjective process of its own guarantee them without encroaching upon the rights of science. Both history and historical science have thus an important bearing on the Christian faith. But this, he holds, need cause no uneasiness, for the historical facts essential to Christianity are so few and general in character that there is no probability that scientific research will ever disprove them.

We now pass to a third point of difference between the new and the old rationalism. The new rationalism differs from the old, as we have

[31] *Die Bedeutung*, etc., p. 50.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

shown at some length, in its conception of the nature of religion and also to some extent in its attitude toward history. But the most characteristic difference between them is found in Troeltsch's doctrine of a religious a priori.[33] This doctrine has its roots in Kant and Schleiermacher, but it was Troeltsch who first clearly formulated and developed it. Religious apriorism sustains about the same relation to the older rationalism as Kant's theory of the categories did to the earlier doctrine of innate ideas. According to Kant there are no innate ideas in the proper sense of the term, but there are immanent principles in the mind that condition experience and determine its form. The raw material or content of experience is derived from the sensibility, but it would be without form and void were it not for the creative activity of thought. It is the categories of thought that alone make experience possible, and these categories are structural in human reason. It is so also, according to Kant, with the moral nature. It, too, has its a priori, its categorical imperative. Without this immanent principle moral experience would be impossible. Now, what Troeltsch did was to extend the idea of a rational a priori to the religious nature. Schleier-

[33]See my article on "Religious Apriorism" in *Studies in Philosophy and Theology,* edited by E. C. Wilm, pp. 93-127.

macher had insisted on the uniqueness and independence of religion. Religion is not a form of knowing or of doing. It is a peculiar form of feeling, the feeling of absolute dependence, and has its own distinctive nature. But Schleiermacher was too intent on differentiating religion from philosophy and morality to deem it fitting to apply to man's need of God the same term that was applied by Kant to the fundamental and characteristic elements in man's intellectual and ethical nature. So he did not speak of a religious a priori, though the idea was implicit in his system. With him religion was primarily a unique experience, to be distinguished from the rational nature rather than identified with it. And this tendency was developed still further by Ritschl and his followers into an almost complete antithesis between religious and theoretical knowledge. By way of reaction, consequently, against this dualism Troeltsch sought to bring back religion into the circle of reason, and so began to speak of a "rational a priori of religion."

The religious a priori, as Troeltsch conceived it, has two outstanding characteristics. It is purely "formal" and is entirely unique. The former idea comes from Kant, the latter from Schleiermacher. As a formal principle the religious a priori has no existence apart from experience and history. It cannot, therefore, furnish a basis for

an independent religion of reason as did the "speculative" and "regressive" rationalisms of the past. These forms of rationalism offered themselves, their logically deduced ideas of God and immortality, as substitutes for the historical religions. But this is excluded by "formal" rationalism. Such a rationalism points out that there is a rational principle immanent in the common religious experience of men. "Being religious," as Troeltsch says, "belongs to the a priori of reason."[34] Indeed, the a-priori element in religion manifests itself only in religious experience and religious history. What the theory of a religious a priori, therefore, does, is to justify, not an abstract religion of reason, but actual historic religion.

Then, too, the religious a priori is "unique." It is not to be confused with the theoretical, the moral, or the æsthetic a priori. It has its own "completely anti-intellectualistic peculiarity." This fact is emphasized so strongly by Troeltsch that one might almost as well speak of his "irrationalism" as his rationalism. The difficulty with this stress on the uniqueness of the religious a priori is that it leaves the conception vague and undefined. It becomes about equivalent to what we mean by religious instinct or impulse or by faith. The moment we seek to define it more precisely

[34] *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie,* p. 44.

we almost inevitably fall into an intellectualistic view of religion. H. Sueskind, for instance, says that the religious a priori means that it can be demonstrated "that it is necessary to think the thought of God, and that, therefore, a necessary idea of reason lies at the basis of religion; and this proof," he adds, "it must, of course, be possible to carry through with cogent reasons, if the thought of the religious a priori is to have a meaning."[35] In this conception of the religious a priori we manifestly have a reversion, though unintended, to the older intellectualistic type of rationalism. The same is still more clearly the case with Bousset, who denies that the religious a priori is distinct from the theoretical, and insists that the fundamental religious ideas are a "necessary constituent of one homogeneous reason." Troeltsch must, then, be credited with true and profound insight when he left the nature of the religious a priori indeterminate, contenting himself with affirming at once its anti-intellectualistic peculiarity and its validity.

The greatest philosophical foe of religion in our day is relativism. All human ideas, we are told, are in flux; there is nothing fixed or final. This is especially true of religious ideas. Religion is not a positive evil, but it is an illusion, a transient phase of human history. It will even-

[35] *Theologische Rundschau,* 1914, p. 57.

tually either disappear or lose the distinctive character it has had in the past. Such is the common view in antireligious circles. As against it it is clearly a matter of prime importance to insist on the fundamental trustworthiness of reason, and particularly on the view that religion is rooted in reason. It has its own a priori. It has, therefore, nothing to fear from relativistic empiricism, and also nothing to fear from the theoretical reason. For it is itself a constituent and permanent factor in that deeper reason which underlies and expresses itself in the intellectual, the moral, the æsthetic, and also the religious nature of man. These different aspects of human nature stand in their own right. They are "autonomous validities," religion as much so as any of the others. Whether the term "religious a priori" is the best to express this idea may be open to question. Some think it too intellectualistic in its implications, and as untrue to the real genius of religion in that it points to a human capacity rather than to a human need. They consequently view with not a little concern the degree of interest awakened by it. Professor E. W. Mayer, for instance, a Ritschlian, writing in 1912,[36] represents the theological youth of Germany as carried away with the new rationalism. He sees them going forth in long processions with

[36] *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche,* pp. 59f.

poles and torches in search of the religious a priori, and as he watches them he feels like a father who beholds his sons forsaking the fruitful daily task and starting out on a vain quest after some magical stone of wisdom.

But whatever perils there may be in the idea of a religious a priori, the term expresses a truth of fundamental significance for our day. It brings out the fact that religion is permanently grounded in the deeps of the human reason, that it has its own autonomous validity, and that it can never be displaced. No one in the past generation has brought out this truth more impressively or with more massive learning than Ernst Troeltsch. Baron Friedrich von Hügel, the Roman Catholic scholar, speaks of "the bewilderingly rich instructiveness, indeed the grandly tonic ethical and spiritual training power, of Troeltsch";[37] and in another connection he says: "Even simply as utterances of one who, amidst the amazing distractions of our times, steadily perceives and proclaims the abiding preeminence of religion, Troeltsch's writings stand among the most impressive, because the most circumspect and veracious testimonies to the indestructible need and conviction that the human mind and conscience still at bottom can find rest alone in God,

[37] *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 145.

its home."[38] Writing shortly after the death of Troeltsch, Baron von Hügel said of him that "he was great if ever man was great."[39]

In the religious apriorism of Troeltsch we have a justification of religion from the standpoint of reason. The method of justification is analogous to that from the standpoint of experience. The modern mind, having rejected the principle of authority, appealed to experience as the test of truth, and summoned religion before its bar. To some it seemed as though this prejudged the case, for religion by its very nature appears to be superempirical. But on inspection it turned out that experience is an elastic term. There is such a thing as religious experience as well as sense experience; and if the latter is self-verifying, there is no reason why the former should not be. Hence religion has appealed to the mystical and pragmatic aspects of religious experience and has found in them a triumphant justification of its own claim. It is so likewise with reason. The modern mind has appealed to it also as a test of truth, and has summoned religion before its bar. Again to many this has seemed to prejudge the case against religion, for religion

[38] *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 194.

[39] The Times (London), March 29, 1923, p. 216.

appears by its very nature to be superrational. But on further study it turns out that reason, like experience, is an elastic term. There is not only a logical or theoretical reason, but there is also a moral reason, an æsthetic reason, and a religious reason; in other words, there is a reason that embraces all the structural interests of the human mind. Each one of these interests has its own rational a priori. Each one has its own independent ground in reason. Religion, therefore, has nothing to fear from reason. It carries its rationality in itself. There is no external rational standard by which it can be judged. It is itself an expression of reason; and hence the modern appeal to reason as well as that to experience turns out triumphantly in favor of religion.

But reason and experience are not to be thought of as two distinct entities. They are, rather, correlative terms. One implies the other. Experience without reason would be formless; and reason without experience would be contentless. Experience presupposes reason, and reason expresses itself in experience. This is as true in religion as elsewhere, and is implied in the doctrine of a religious a priori. There is no religion of reason apart from experience. The only true religion of reason is that which springs up spontaneously in experience and history. These spontaneous religious growths need guid-

ance and correction, but they have their own corrective principles within themselves. Reason is immanent in them. Between reason and our historic faith there is therefore no necessary conflict. Rather may we say with the poet,

> ". . . the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it."

CHAPTER V

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

EXPERIENCE, reason, utility—these are the great tests of truth in the modern world. The first two are recognized by theoretical science, though only when understood in a restricted sense; the third is implicit in the socio-economic interest and in the belief in progress, though also only in a limited sense of the term. The appeal both to experience and to reason, as we have seen, has been used to undermine religious belief. But religion has met these attacks by so enlarging the meaning of experience and reason as to find in them a basis for religious belief. Experience in its broader meaning includes religion, and so justifies it. Reason likewise in its broader sense numbers among its a-priori principles a religious a priori and thus guarantees the autonomous validity of religion. But how about utility? In the general sense of value it has already been embraced under experience. It is the pragmatic or valuational aspect of religious experience that is the chief pillar of empirical apologetics. Re-

ligion is true because it works, because it is useful. The utilitarian test of truth is thus one that religion welcomes rather than the reverse. "Pragmatism," as George Tyrrell says, "is an easy and illuminative philosophy, particularly pliable to the needs of the apologist. . . . In making Life the criterion of truth, in subjecting the Law of Belief to the Law of Prayer it is evidently at one with the teaching of Jesus. This creates an almost violent prepossession in its favor on the part of the apologist."[1] The extreme to which an apologist may go in employing it is illustrated by Chatterton-Hill. "Every religious system," he says, "that survives is adapted to the necessities of the society in which it survives. Such a religious system is therefore true in the only sense in which truth can be proved—in the sense that it responds to the end in view of which it was evolved. Truth is necessarily a relative conception; and the truth of a religious system can be judged of only with reference to a given environment. In this environment the system is true (or untrue), and its truth (or untruth) can be proved by the concrete results of its influence on social life. Christianity is true for the Western world; Islam, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism are true in their respective environments. Each responds to the needs of heterogeneous social

[1] *Through Scylla and Charybdis,* p. 192.

aggregates."[2] Such an apologetic use, however, as this of the utilitarian principle is manifestly self-destructive. It denies outright the absoluteness of Christianity, and condemns in advance all foreign missions. Nevertheless, it shows how it is possible even from the relativistic standpoint to use the pragmatic test of truth in such a way as to confirm the practical validity of religion.

But the general appeal made by religion to utility does not directly meet the situation created by the modern socio-economic interest and the modern belief in social progress. Indeed, the particular argument used by Chatterton-Hill is conceived in the interest of conservatism and reaction rather than of social progress. "Religion," he says, "is the instrument whereby the sacrifice of individual interests to social needs is obtained. . . . Religion is a social creation, created by society with a view to safeguarding its own interests as against the individual. . . . The aim of Christianity is primarily to dominate and to subdue the individual and only secondarily to reward and console him. . . . We see in Christianity preeminently an organ of social defense, an instrument of social integration, and only secondarily a factor of individual evolution. . . . The essence of Christianity, which consists in the subordination of the individual to society, is of an anti-

[2] *The Sociological Value of Christianity*, p. xiv.

humanitarian nature. Humanitarianism is a doctrine that takes account only of the individual. . . . In the great conflict of the near future between Western civilization and socialism it will be found that the surest instrument of social defense, the most efficient of social forces, is Christianity."[3] With such a conception of religion as this it is evident that almost any form of social injustice could be defended. According to it no individual and no class has any rights as over against society as a whole; and the function of religion is to protect society against claims to such rights. This social doctrine, it is true, might be and has been used as a ground for dispossessing the propertied classes; but such action has seldom been taken under religious sanction. What Chatterton-Hill manifestly has in mind is a defense of the *status quo* and an enlistment of religion in the interest of the existing social order. Indeed, the very rationale of religion, as he conceives it, consists in its value as a conservative sociological force.

It is not, then, surprising that social radicals like Karl Marx have evolved the theory that social inequality and injustice are the source and ground of religion. If the main function of religion is to subordinate the individual to society by mak-

[3] *The Sociological Value of Christianity,* pp. 14, 40, 186, 165, 174, 282.

ing him willing to bear the ills of the present because of the hope of a future life, it is evident that if these ills were removed there would no longer be any need of religion. Whether these ills can be removed may be open to question. But Marx thinks they can be, and the idea of indefinite social progress seems to imply it. The chief ills of life, we are told, are due to defects in the present organization of society. These defects can be corrected; equality can be established; class distinctions can be abolished. And when this is done most of the suffering of the present will disappear. Men will find their satisfaction in this life. There will be no need of the belief in a life to come. Such a belief exists only in "a state of society that requires an illusion." It is economic inequality and the resulting evils that give rise to religion. When these evils are removed, religion will have lost its *raison d'être* and will inevitably vanish. It has no intrinsic worth; it represents no permanent need of the human spirit. Yet it is not necessarily to be regarded as a positive evil. It is a symptom of social disease rather than its cause. "If religion," says Marx, "exists, it is in consequence of a defective social organization whose cause must be looked for in the very essence of the state itself. . . . For us religion is no longer the cause of social imperfection but its effect." The logical

attitude, therefore, of the Marxian socialist toward religion would seem to be that of complete indifference.

But in actual life religion is not such a negligible factor as the doctrinaire Marxian assumes. It is linked up with the present social order and is a powerful support of it. Hence in practice Marxian socialism, instead of adopting an indifferent attitude toward religion, has, as a rule, been actively hostile to it. William Liebknecht, for instance, said, "It is our duty as socialists to root out the faith in God with all our zeal, nor is one worthy of the name who does not consecrate himself to the spread of atheism." Religion, we are told, is "the opiate of the people." It is an instrument of oppression. Preachers are simply "the chloroforming agents of the confiscating classes." They are the hirelings of the moneyed interests, and consciously or unconsciously are using their influence to keep the people in subjection. They administer to them a kind of spiritual anodyne that prevents them from rising in their revolutionary wrath against their oppressors. So no matter what the Marxian theorist may say, the militant Marxian sees in religion a positive evil, a foe to progress, and a menace to the welfare of society.

If in defense of the social utility of religion stress is laid on the moral inspiration that it brings

to men and on the regenerating influence that it exercises in their lives, the Marxian socialist is still unmoved. For to him morality as well as religion is a tool of oppression. The existing moral code, he holds, was created by the ruling classes in their own interest. Its laws relative to property and to human conduct in general were designed with a view to maintaining the *status quo*. The masses are indoctrinated with the idea of the sanctity of these moral rules and hence are kept in subjection. The fact, consequently, that religion is a source of moral inspiration by no means commends it to the consistent Marxian socialist. Rather is this an added indictment against religion, that it quickens the conscience and so enslaves men all the more completely to the evil social conditions reflected in the moral code. Both ethical idealism and religion are the products of a defective state of society and are means consciously or unconsciously used to perpetuate such a state. In and of themselves they are effects rather than causes. They are like the cloud above Niagara Falls, which is beautiful to gaze upon when shot through with the golden rays of the setting sun, but impotent, generating no electricity, turning no wheels, simply the powerless concomitant of the mighty dashing waters beneath. So likewise it is the great economic struggle going on between the different

classes of society that creates the cloudy dreams of idealism and of religion. These dreams have no substantiality of their own, they embody no objective reality; but insofar as they cast a halo of sanctity over the existing social order and hypnotize men into perpetuating it, they become a source of evil. And such, according to Marxian doctrine, has been and is the actual function of religion and of ethical idealism in human history. They support the *status quo,* and by that very fact are condemned. The Marxian standard of utility finds no place for them. This is, of course, an extreme view, but it represents a powerful current of thought in our own day.

Another method of applying the standard of social utility to religion is that represented by Emile Durkheim, the distinguished French sociologist. Durkheim agrees with Marx in making religion a purely social creation. It is the structure of society or, rather, the needs created by it that give rise to religion. But he differs from Marx in that he holds that the origin of religion is to be found not in a defective and transient state of society but in its essential and permanent structure. Marx looked forward to the time when there would be no religion. The reorganization of society would render it unnecessary. Men in a communistic state would lay it aside as naturally as one does an outworn gar-

ment. But Durkheim sees in religion a social necessity. The very nature of society requires it. No change in social organization will ever enable men to dispense with religion. Religion is "an essential and permanent aspect of humanity." For it grows out of or, rather, is involved in, the human faculty of idealizing; and this faculty "is not a sort of luxury which a man could get along without, but a condition of his very existence. He could not be a social being—that is to say, he could not be a man—if he had not acquired it." The very texture of society implies it. "A society can neither create itself nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal. This creation is not a sort of work of supererogation for it, by which it would complete itself, being already formed; it is the act by which it is periodically made and remade."[4]

This, however, does not mean that the ideal created by society and embodied in religious faith represents an independent and objective reality. "The reality which religious thought expresses is society";[5] or, as E. S. Ames puts it, "The reality which the idea of God expresses may be thought of, not as an independent person or individual in the very form or shape of man,

[4] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 21, 423, 422.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

but as the Common Will idealized and magnified in personal symbolism."[6] There is then no transcendent Deity. The supernatural objects of faith are mythical. The thought side of religion is invalid. "The real function of religion is not to make us *think*, to enrich our knowledge, nor to add to the conceptions which we owe to science others of another origin and another character, but rather it is to make us *act*, to aid us to live." Theology is therefore no essential part of religion. Religious thought will ultimately succumb to scientific thought. But this does not mean that religion is false. "It is," says Durkheim, "an essential postulate of sociology that a human institution cannot rest upon an error and a lie, without which it could not exist. . . . In reality there are no religions which are false. All are true in their fashion; all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence." In other words, the social utility of religion constitutes its truth. There is no such thing as absolute religious truth. Religious beliefs are constantly changing. "There are no gospels which are immortal, but neither is there any reason for believing that humanity is incapable of inventing new ones." New deities will arise in the course of time, but what their nature will be we do not yet know. "The old gods are

[6] *The Journal of Religion*, 1921, p. 465.

growing old or already dead, and others are not yet born."[7]

This theory emphatically asserts the social utility of religion but denies its objective validity, or, rather, it interprets its objective validity in terms of social utility, which amounts practically to the same thing. A religion that is valid only in the sense that it is socially useful is not valid in the objective sense of the term. A purely utilitarian truth is no truth, and a purely utilitarian religion is no religion. The idealizing process that lies at the basis of religion derives all its vitality and power from the implicit faith that it is apprehending an order of objective reality. Apart from this faith it would itself disintegrate; and this would mean the end of religion and of its social utility, for the social utility of religion depends upon and consists in its idealism. The objective validity of religion cannot, therefore, be detached from its social utility. The two stand or fall together. It cannot be permanently maintained that religion meets the test of utility but fails to meet the test of experience and of reason. Religion cannot be regarded as a subjective illusion and yet continue to be a social force. If, then, religion is, as Durkheim asserts, a social necessity, the average mind is almost certain to

[7]Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* pp. 416, 2, 3, 428, 427.

take another step and conclude that it is objectively valid. It was this step that Chatterton-Hill took. He finds in the social utility of religion a basis not only for the truth of religion but also for both theological and social conservatism.

There is yet another way in which the standard of social utility is applied to religion. This is represented by T. N. Carver, the Harvard economist. Professor Carver is not particularly concerned with the question of the objective validity of religion. He himself accepts the theistic idea though apparently in a pantheistic sense. For him the laws of nature are the laws of God and the only laws of God ascertainable by man. He says "that the only real school of theology is a school where the uniformities of the divine order are studied by the methods of science," and "that the only person who is entitled to a hearing on any fundamental question of theology is the scientist." There is no ideal realm of values, no moral law superior to the law of nature. "Morality is merely social hygiene. . . . Anything is moral which works well for society in the long run, and anything is immoral which works badly for society in the long run. . . . Whatever the order of the universe is, that *is* the moral order." The *real* is the truth that God has made, it is the only true revelation of him; the ideal is misleading, it is the truth that men make. For our knowledge of

God and the divine will we must, therefore, turn exclusively to nature and to the laws that promote the welfare of society in the "physical and practical sense" of the term. But in spite of this negative attitude toward religious belief in its traditional form Professor Carver is deeply interested in religion as a vital social force. He recognizes the fact that it has in the past been a great generator of social energy, and apparently sees no reason why it should not continue to be such in the future. But he holds that it is a matter of vital significance to religion that its energy should be directed in the most productive way possible. "That," he says, "is the most productive expenditure of energy which supports the most life and supports it most abundantly, which gives the largest control over the forces of nature and the most complete dominion over the world, and which enables men to control whatever environment happens to surround them and to live comfortably in it."[8] If the Christian religion promotes or can be made to promote productivity of this kind more effectively than irreligion or than any other religion, its triumph is assured. But if it fails to do so, it has no claim upon the future. Its fate will inevitably be determined by the degree of its social and economic utility.

In elaborating this thesis Professor Carver dis-

[8] *The Religion Worth Having,* pp. 87f., 84, 13.

tinguishes in his homely but trenchant style between the "pig-trough" and the "work-bench" philosophy of life. The former he finds illustrated in the impractical mysticism and emotionalism that has characterized much of the religion of the past and in the hedonistic view of life that underlies much of current socialism. According to this philosophy enjoyment is the end of life. Opposed to this view stands the work-bench philosophy which lays its stress on productive achievement. Not pleasure but power is its ideal. This standpoint is illustrated in the modern bourgeois or capitalistic order of society with its free competition and its belief in the survival of the fittest. The struggle for existence, according to Carver, is a condition from which we cannot escape. The only question is as to how it is to be carried on, whether by war or by politics or by economic competition. The last is the highest form of the struggle, for it promotes production. It is the type of struggle that is represented by the modern industrial world. Fundamentally and in principle, consequently, the present economic order is sound; and the hope of religion lies in accepting it and heartily preaching the gospel that underlies it. The church needs to learn that Jesus was "a hard-headed Galilæan carpenter," that "the kingdom of God is a kingdom of productive power at work," and that

"righteousness and productiveness are synonymous." When this type of preaching is adopted by the church its success and that of its members is certain. "It is no accident," says Carver, "that every Protestant country has outstripped every Catholic country, just as every Catholic country has outstripped every pagan country. Nor is it any accident that in Protestant countries religious people, especially those of the stricter sort, have, as a rule, outstripped the irreligious people. . . . The stricter discipline in essentials, and the less strict insistence upon nonessentials, which characterize the leading Protestant churches, have resulted in greater economy of energy and more productive lives among Protestants than among Catholics, and among religious than among irreligious people."[9]

We need not, then, necessarily be disturbed over the existence of rich men's churches and over the separation of the churches from the masses. This separation is what we would naturally expect as the result of the operation of economic law. The church people are more ethical, more productive, and hence more prosperous. For a religious organization "not to become a rich man's church in this sense is a disgrace and an evidence of failure to perform its mission."[10] In the present close connection between the church and the busi-

[9] *The Religion Worth Having*, p. 96f. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

ness and professional classes there is, therefore, no particular ground for concern. Rather is it an evidence that the church has in a measure at least been preaching the gospel of productive work. Insofar as it continues to do this, its future is assured. For in the long run the work-bench philosophy is certain to triumph over the pig-trough philosophy, whether the latter take the cruder form of irreligion or the more sublimated form of transcendental ethics.

We thus see that the test of social utility has been applied to religion in several different ways and with varying results. Marx regarded religion as a pure illusion without any function in a properly organized society. Durkheim looked upon religion as a social necessity but reduced it to a social passion, a subjective ethical idealism, without any real object of faith beyond society itself. Carver sees in religion the possibility of great social and economic utility, but apparently interprets its fundamental ideas in a pantheistic and this-worldly sense. Chatterton-Hill finds in the sociological value of Christianity a justification for the belief in its traditional creed. These four types are not exhaustive, but they suffice as illustrations of the different ways in which religion fares when it is brought before the bar of social utility.

The divergent conclusions reached are due primarily to differences in philosophy, but they are also due in part to different conceptions of society and of social utility. Marx thought that the chief need of existing society was revolution, and his idea of the new social order was that of a "pleasure economy" in which no serious sacrifice would be required of the individual. This "hedonistic utopia" is, as C. A. Ellwood says, a "chimera," but it still has considerable vogue in vulgar socialism. It implies that religion in the future will be wholly unnecessary, and that since religion is, as a rule, opposed to revolution, it is at present an evil. Chatterton-Hill regards the submission of the individual to the authority of the group as the fundamental need of society, Carver finds it in productive work, and Durkheim apparently in the devotion of the individual to the common good. These three views, however, amount to about the same thing. They imply that society will always require of the individual a discipline and sacrifice, which can be adequately met only by religion, no matter how much the individual may himself profit from the work or discipline to which he subjects himself. "The nature of our social life," says C. A. Ellwood, "is such that if progress is to continue, it demands constantly the service and sacrifice of individuals for the good of humanity. . . . A re-

ligionless world would be a social world of uncertainties, destitute of enthusiasm and of vision, reduced to the dead level of expediency. It would be a social world in which neither harmony nor good will would long prevail."[11] Religion is therefore necessary as a social cement.

But how does religion serve this function? How does it supply the individual with the incentive to service and sacrifice? The traditional answer is plain. It does so by inculcating faith in a personal God and in personal immortality. But is this faith essential to religion? Durkheim answers in the negative, and so also apparently Carver. From their standpoint religion is practically identical with social service, with humanitarianism of one kind or another. This is at present a common view. The religion of humanism, we are told, is slowly but steadily displacing the religion of theism. The religion of the future will have no God except Humanity or Nature. But such a religion will be no religion. The fatal defect in all this-world religions is that they try to get the fruits of religion without religion. They are therefore condemned in advance to defeat. Religion as a social dynamic implies the supernatural. There is no real religion that does not in its faith transcend both nature and human-

[11] *The Reconstruction of Religion,* pp. 38, 60.

ity. "The more-than-human values of religion"[12] are the distinctive and essential part of religion. It is, then, idle to attempt to conserve the social utility of religion while sacrificing its supernatural implications. Without the latter the former would vanish. If religion really has a high degree of social utility, if it is a social necessity, the probability is that its supernatural claims will succeed in maintaining themselves. On this main point Chatterton-Hill is right.

But the whole attempt to judge religion solely or chiefly by its social utility is a mistake. It subjects religion to an external test, and the result is either its rejection (Marx) or its perversion (Durkheim and Carver) or a rather frail defense (Chatterton-Hill). The situation in this respect with reference to utility is about the same as that with reference to experience and reason as tests of religious truth. Sense experience and the purely logical reason furnish no adequate basis for religious belief; they, rather, negate it. So also social utility in what would commonly be understood by "the physical and practical sense" of the term cannot go far in the way of substantiating religious faith, though it may lend it some support. But both "experience" and "reason"

[12]See the able and instructive article on this subject by E. S. Brightman in the *Journal of Religion*, 1921, pp. 362-377.

may, as we have seen, be lifted to the plane of religion or incorporated in it and thus become its effective supports. They cease then, however, to be merely external props, and become aspects of the self-verifying power of faith. Experience in its religious form carries with it its own inner conviction, as truly as does sense experience; and the religious a priori is as structural in human reason as are the logical categories of thought. In a similar way "utility" also may be lifted to the religious plane. It may be made to embrace the inner and distinctive satisfactions of religion; and in this broader sense it ceases to be an external standard to which religion must submit and becomes an inner standard by which religion judges itself. In other words, religion has its own intrinsic worth. It is a constituent element in social welfare and not merely a means to an end. The question of its utility is, therefore, largely dependent upon itself. Religion is a factor in the conception of utility quite as much as utility is a factor in the conception of religion. Whether religion is worth having depends quite as much and more on what religion itself is than upon any ulterior ends it may serve. As a living fellowship with the Infinite, as a vital force in human life, as a source of hope, courage, and loyalty, it brings with it its own reward, its own utility. Religion thus meets the modern utilitarian test

of truth in the same way that it meets the experiential and rational tests. It enlarges the concept of utility so as to include religious values and so finds its justification in its own inherent worth, as well as in the immediacy of its own experience and in the validity of its own immanent reason. In this way religion by virtue of its own native vitality gathers up into itself all the evidential force to be derived from the authority accorded in modern times to experience, reason, and utility.

But while the ultimate test of religion is to be found in its own intrinsic value, the question of its own general social utility is still one of great practical significance. Religion does not live unto itself. It is organically related to life as a whole, and must, if it is to maintain itself, play its part in the world. It must, to some extent at least, justify itself to the world as well as to itself. Religious experience may be self-verifying, but this does not make religious beliefs wholly independent of the empirical sciences. The religious a priori may have its own autonomous validity, but this does not render religion completely indifferent to the claims of the common reason. And so religion may have its own intrinsic worth, but this does not entirely exempt it from the necessity of meeting the test of general social utility.

Religion must have its *modus vivendi* with sociology and socialism as well as with natural science and philosophy. Indeed, the claims of the former are at present far more urgent than those of the latter. People to-day are much more interested in the social utility of religion than in its abstract truth. For them "the real problem," as Bishop McConnell says, "is not as to whether Christianity is absolute or not, but as to whether it is adequate or not."[13] Is Christianity able to meet the demands of the present social situation? This question is not identical with that relative to the ultimate truth of Christianity, but it has an important bearing upon it; and for practical religion it is a question of decisive significance.

In dealing with this question it is necessary, first of all, to form as clear a conception as possible of the main elements in the social problem of our day. This problem is one of such vast complexity that only some of its more significant aspects can here be brought out.

Basal to the whole problem is the belief in social progress, and not only in social progress but in the plasticity of society. The belief in social progress is, as we pointed out in the first chapter, one of the great characteristic ideas of the modern world. It stands opposed to the ancient heathen belief in a series of world-cycles and to

[13] *Public Opinion and Theology*, p. 249.

the apocalyptic hope of the Jews. It is more akin to the latter than the former. The belief in world-cycles excludes the idea of progress. Each cycle is a repetition of the preceding one. There is no goal toward which the universe is tending, no real development. So far as the present cycle is concerned, mankind is now involved in a process of "inevitable degeneration and decay—inevitable because it was prescribed by the nature of the universe."[14] "Time," as Horace says, "depreciates the value of the world." As contrasted with this belief the apocalyptic hope of the Jews looked forward to a new and eternal world-order in which their ethical ideals would be realized. It thus implied the idea both of cosmic development and of human progress. But it was a development or progress initiated and carried through entirely by divine agency. The idea of progress as a law inherent in the nature of things or as a result effected by human endeavor is a modern conception. It is also one of great dynamic power. It releases the ideal forces of human nature from their bondage to fate and makes them at least potentially a powerful factor in shaping the future of society.

One may, it is true, conceive of progress itself as a fate, a natural necessity. But this is a superstition whose logical consequences for human con-

[14] J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, p. 9.

duct are seldom drawn. The freedom of man is generally assumed, and the certainty of progress based on natural law, like that based on divine predestination, only nerves the will to greater effort. One has the feeling under such circumstances that in the struggle for social progress one has the support either of nature or of Providence. In any case, since the French Revolution and the industrial revolution in England there has been a growing conviction that the social order is not an external fatality, that it is plastic to human touch, that man has made it, and having made it is able to unmake it. It is this conviction that forms the presupposition of the social problem in its present concrete form.

Another characteristic of present-day thought on the social question is the tendency to subordinate the individual to society. Society, we are told, is the reality; the individual is but an abstraction from it. He has no independent worth and no independent destiny. His whole being is determined by the group or class to which he belongs or by his social environment. This tendency in modern thought is being carried to an almost absurd extreme. Not only is all morality said to be social. But "logic," as Professor Fite says, "tells the same story. For truth is also social; it turns out to be nothing but the opinion of the race as against that of the individual. . . .

Likewise for psychology mental development is social. . . . Child psychology, so called, fairly wallows in the social, and condemns the poor child to an exclusively social life. I have somewhere," continues Professor Fite, "seen a pedagogical treatise in which the child rose in the morning, donned his social vestments, ate his social breakfast, and went about his social occupations, indulging later in the day in some social recreation and some further social refection—after which, I should say, it remained only to put on his social nightgown and tuck him into his social bed."[15] But absurd as are some of the expressions of the socializing tendency in modern thought, it is still true that the serious discussion of the social problem in our day is dominated by the idea of social solidarity. It is through legislation, through group action, that the ills of human life are to be removed. The appeal to the individual as such is of little avail. This is the standpoint represented both by socialism and the science of sociology.

A third important aspect of the modern social problem is the prominence assigned to the economic factor. With many the social question is primarily and almost exclusively an economic question. So much so is this the case that I have designated the social interest of our day as the

[15] *Individualism*, p. 4.

"socio-economic" interest. It is the economic question that gives color and direction to the whole social problem. If the bread-and-butter question could be settled, there would be no further difficulty in the relation of men to each other. "I reckon," says a social radical in somewhat crude terms, "that when the wardrobe is full, and grub adorns the shelves, that salvation will be plenty and souls will save themselves." It is this doctrine that underlies Marxian socialism. According to Marx it is the economic environment, the methods of production and distribution, that determine man's consciousness rather than the reverse; or, as Feuerbach puts it, "a man is what he eats."

A fourth characteristic of the modern social situation is the revolt of the proletariat and its struggle for supremacy, or at least for economic equality. The industrial revolution gave rise to a new social class and a new social consciousness, that of the propertyless wage-earners. It greatly augmented their numbers, and led to their organization as a distinct and militant group. It is the struggle of this group for better social and economic conditions that has riveted the attention of the world upon the social problem. The struggle is a class and a mass movement, and has about it the intensity and immediacy or irrationality of such movements. But back of it there

is a revolutionary philosophy that aims at the overthrow not only of the existing economic system but of those cultural ideals embodied in the traditional morality and religion. The movement has therefore been one away from the church and from religion.

The counterpart of the proletarian movement and its chief inciting cause is to be found in capitalism, which may be considered the fifth important factor in the modern social problem. It is not easy to give a precise and adequate definition of capitalism, but its main features may be briefly enumerated. It is individualistic; it implies free competition; it stimulates unduly the acquisitive instinct; it encourages production, at times overproduction or wasteful production; it favors the concentration of capital in the hands of the few. The last feature is the one that has been chiefly responsible for the proletarian or socialistic revolt. Whether it is a necessary part of the capitalistic system, is open to question. The unequal distribution of wealth might conceivably be corrected in large measure by heavy inheritance-taxes, by the fixing of monopoly prices, by the appropriation of large unearned increments on land values, and by the restriction of immigration. But as the system actually has worked, it has tended in the direction of great inequality, an inequality that is incapable of ethical justifi-

cation and that inevitably leads to protest and social unrest.

In production and distribution there are two ideals. One is dominated by the law of mercy, the other by the law of justice. One says, "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his *needs*"; the other says, "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his *deeds*." To neither of these ideals is the existing system attuned. In principle it accepts the law of justice, but in practice it often departs glaringly from it. The law of mercy it hardly recognizes at all, except as it is forced to do so. It has not yet learned the lesson of "Live and let live." No doubt it has its own great merits. It allows freedom, it encourages individual initiative and enterprise, it stimulates productive work. It is, indeed, the only system that has solved the problem of production. But, on the other hand, it has its great evils. It is hard and relentless in spirit, it subordinates the man to the machine, it engenders strife, and is more concerned about power and victory than about peace and well-being. These evils grow necessarily out of a system of unrestrained freedom of competition, and their existence imperatively demands that the system be modified by being brought into subjection to the law both of humanity and justice.

Akin to capitalism is nationalism, which is the

last element in the modern social problem that I shall mention. What capitalism is within the national group, that is nationalism in the world as a whole. The two are theoretically independent of each other. It is quite conceivable that a state organized on a communistic basis might be as nationalistic as our present capitalistic states. There is nothing in universal communism that necessarily would put an end to war. National rivalries would probably flare up under such a system as readily as under existing conditions. Nevertheless, modern nationalism and modern capitalism have grown up together, and there is a certain kinship of spirit between them. Both stand for the ideal of power, both generate strife, and both are quite content that one group should prosper at the expense of others. Neither, however, is an unmixed evil. Both have their roots deep in human nature. Capitalism grows out of the acquisitive instinct, without which no high degree of civilization would be attainable. Nationalism has a more complex source. The idea of nationality is not easily analyzed, but that the national spirit is a natural growth and not an artificial creation can hardly be questioned.

Lessing a century and a half ago said, "I have no conception of the love of country; and it seems to me at best a heroic feeling, which I am quite content to be without." But to-day such a con-

fession would be generally regarded as an indication of an abnormal state of mind. Since Lessing's time there has been a remarkable development of the national spirit, and this development, it is felt, must have some valid basis. Exactly what constitutes a nation is not perfectly clear. A nation is not a race, not a territory, not a language, not a history, not even a state. It is something different from any and all of these, and yet to some extent implies them all. "It is chiefly tribal feeling," says Bertrand Russell, "that generates the unity of a national state, but it is not only tribal feeling that generates its strength. Its strength results principally from two fears, neither of which is unreasonable: the fear of crime and anarchy within, and the fear of aggression from without. . . . In addition to these two, there is a third source of strength in a national state, namely, patriotism in its religious aspect, . . . an element of worship, of willing sacrifice, of joyful merging of the individual life in the life of the nation. This religious element in patriotism is essential to the strength of the state, since it enlists the best that is in most men on the side of national sacrifice."[16] Nationalism has thus both a natural basis and an ethical justification. Nevertheless, in an intensified and un-

[16] *Principles of Social Reconstruction,* pp. 54, 55, 56.

moralized form it is a breeder of war and perhaps the greatest menace to the welfare of mankind.

Such, then, are the main factors that enter into the present social situation and that give rise to the social problem: the belief in social progress, the subordination of the individual to the group, the prominence of the economic element, socialism or the proletarian revolt, capitalism and nationalism. All of these factors agree in concentrating attention (1) upon this world, (2) upon external conditions, and (3) upon human power. The power may be conceived as primarily individual in one case, as primarily social in another, and as primarily national in yet another; but in each case it is human power on which reliance is placed for man's redemption. And this power is regarded as manifesting itself in the control of external conditions. Some may think that the best way to effect this control is through the increased production of material goods, and others may think that the best way is through a reorganization of human society that will bring about a more equal distribution of these goods. But in either case it is the external environment that alone is considered significant. The program in both instances is a this-worldly program. Man's weal or woe is regarded as determined by his present outward conditions. It is the nature outside of man rather than that inside of him that

needs to be conquered. And this conquest is possible only through human wisdom and might. It is the kingdom of man, not the kingdom of God, that is to be established in the world.

Such is the ideal generated by the modern socio-economic interest and by the belief in social progress, and such is the ideal that underlies both socialism and capitalism and also modern nationalism. Pleasure, power, pride—these are its hallmarks. And in view of the intensified form in which they appear in the titanic industrialism, the militant socialism, and the aggressive and exaggerated nationalism of our day, it is not strange that the Christian spirit does not feel at home in the modern world. "The whole religious life," as Troeltsch says, "is itself in a serious crisis."[17] It finds itself in a society dominated by a spirit and ideal hostile to itself. That quiet and peace, that inner triumph over the world, that sense of sacred fellowship with God and man, that outlook into the eternal—these spiritual values, in which the religious life finds its chief good, are to a large extent negated by the world about us.

In view of the foregoing facts it is not surprising that modern religion has much of it withdrawn into itself. It has retired into a cloistered subjectivity, contenting itself with cultivating its

[17] *Die Sozialphilosophie des Christentums,* p. 31.

own mystic states and the inner life of the soul. Or it has raised a vain protest against the modern belief in social progress, has sought to revive obsolete modes of thought, and has thus condemned itself to intellectual provincialism. But neither of these attitudes can the militant church adopt. It must play its parts in the world of to-day, it must form some sort of working alliance with modern thought, and seek to bring modern economic and political life into greater conformity with its own ideals. The church did this in the ancient and mediæval world, and what it then did it must do to-day. Just as the early and mediæval church worked out a Christian social philosophy by the fusion of its own religious teaching with the Stoic doctrine of a natural moral law, so the modern church must take the more congenial elements in the social thought of to-day and by transforming them make them the basis of a new Christian philosophy of society. This is an obligation that the church cannot and dare not shirk. Its own continued efficiency in the world is dependent to a large extent upon the contribution it makes to the solution of the social problem. It is this fact that has given rise to the social gospel. The social gospel is the response of the church to modern social theory and practice.

This response has taken two distinct though related forms. The first is more general and less

radical than the second. It marks a break with traditional theology and traditional ecclesiastical practice rather than with traditional social theory. It aims at social reform rather than social revolution; it attacks concrete evils rather than the system as a whole; its method is retail rather than wholesale. But it is nevertheless thoroughly modern in its standpoint. Its modernity manifests itself in three main respects: in its acceptance of the belief in social progress, in its stress on social solidarity, and in its recognition of the importance of material well-being. It thus stands opposed to the millenarian eschatology, the individualism, and the asceticism of the past. It falls in line with the modern tendency to transfer interest from heaven to earth, from the individual to society, and from subjective spirituality to objective efficiency. This does not mean that the social gospel rejects the belief in heaven, or that it discountenances the evangelistic appeal to the individual, or that it denies value to the cultivation of personal piety. But it does mean that the social gospel subordinates these tendencies in the religious thought and life of the past to the great social task that confronts humanity here and now. "Its interests," as Rauschenbusch says, "lie on earth, within the social relations of the life that now is."[18] This standpoint also means that re-

[18] *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 31.

ligion represents no isolated interest, but that it has a significance for all of life, the economic, the political, and social as well as the distinctively spiritual and ethical. Or, rather, it means that true and wholesome spirituality and morality cannot remain cooped up in a narrow individualism and a barren subjectivity. They must seek the light and the freedom of a redeemed social order.

The anti-eschatological, anti-individualistic and anti-ascetic tendencies of the social gospel—or, from the positive point of view, its this-worldly tendencies—have already to a considerable degree been incorporated into the thought and practice of the church. The premillenarian movement, it it true, is still active and represents a reactionary force that needs still to be reckoned with. But in the programs and policies of the leading Protestant denominations the tendency manifestly is to adopt the standpoint represented by the social gospel. This appears clearly in the change that has taken place in our conception of foreign missions. "To-day," as Gerald Birney Smith says, "the missionary enterprise is being shifted from a program of rescuing a few souls from eternal disaster to the ideal of a long campaign of education and social reconstruction in the non-Christian nations."[19] Indeed, the shift has already to a

[19] *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology,* p. 110.

large extent been made. Our slogan no longer is "the evangelization of the world in this generation," but, rather, "the Christianization of the world even if it takes fifty generations." Our look into the future has been enormously extended. We are thinking of centuries and even millenniums to come. And the task has been proportionately enlarged. It has to do not simply with the conversion of individuals and the establishment of a church, but with the transformation of heathen society and the establishment of Christian ideals in the entire life of the people. This altered plan and outlook has naturally brought about a corresponding change in missionary method. Stress is now laid not simply on personal evangelism, but on education, on hospital work, and on the improvement of social and economic conditions in general. These lines of activity, it is true, are treated as means to an end, but they are indispensable means, and this makes them an essential part of the missionary program. The ultimate aim may no doubt remain the same, but it is humanized and socialized in such a way as to be practically a new objective.

The influence of the social gospel is also seen in the institutional and community churches that are being established, in the new program that is being worked out for the rural church, and in the recreational activities connected with the churches

in general. In these new developments it is implied that the mission of the church is broader than has previously been recognized. It takes in the whole man. The older negative and ascetic attitude toward life is being given up. Life as a whole in all its normal unfolding is coming to be regarded as sacred. What religion, consequently, should aim at is the promotion of the general well-being of mankind. And this aim it can realize only in conjunction with the agencies that modern science puts at our disposal. There is no magical religious process by which health can be restored and maintained. Mere praying will not save a community from an epidemic or guarantee to it material prosperity. The community must avail itself of all the knowledge that can be gained from medical and economic science. Nor can religion fulfill its special mission of character-building apart from the social and psychological conditions under which individuals live. In spite of all that the prophet Ezekiel says of the absolute independence of the moral personality of the individual, and in spite of the fact that in the abstract and ideal his teaching is sound, it is still true that in the world as we know it the individual does live under the ban of his own past and also under that of an evil heredity and an evil environment. In a world of heredity and social solidarity it is impossible that the ideal of complete moral

independence on the part of the individual should be realized. No doctrine of supernatural conversion can blind us to this fact. The moral and spiritual redemption of men is dependent upon certain favoring social and psychological conditions. It is therefore the duty of the church not only to determine by scientific study what these conditions are but to do everything in its power to promote their establishment in the life of the community. It is this fact that gives historic significance to the social gospel. "The social gospel," as Rauschenbusch says, "registers the fact that for the first time in history the spirit of Christianity has had a chance to form a working partnership with real social and psychological science."[20]

But while the social gospel in its more general form carries with it an important change of emphasis, it does not mark so fundamental and decisive a break with the past as is sometimes supposed. It is no doubt true that men to-day protest against and seek to correct certain evils to which previously they patiently submitted. It is also true that there was at first more or less of ignorant opposition on the part of Christian people to new discoveries and inventions that sought to relieve pain, to prevent disease, and even to save men from death. For instance, "to

[20] *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 5.

alleviate the sufferings of childbirth by the use of anæsthetics was for a time vigorously denounced as a sacrilegious scheme to remove the providentially appointed consequences of Eve's share in the primal sin of mankind."[21] Likewise when vaccination against smallpox was first introduced, it was condemned on the ground that it contravened the divine will. When a man gets smallpox, it was said, it is the divine will that he should have it. So also when the lightning-rod was invented, it was objected that it too was an attempt to thwart the divine purpose; for when a man was struck by lightning it was God's will that this should occur. But it could hardly be seriously maintained that this was ever the considered judgment of the Christian world. Not only does it imply a fatalism inconsistent with Christian teaching, but it contradicts the fundamental Christian law of love which instinctively seeks to save life and to relieve pain and suffering. It may, I think, be safely stated that there never was a time in the history of the church when Christian people freely submitted to what they believed to be preventable evils. However debauched they may at times have been by theological speculation, they never went so far as this.

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[21]Gerald Birney Smith, *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology*, p. 118.

The impulse to life inherent in the Christian faith would not have permitted it.

That we have succeeded in preventing some diseases and removing some evils that to earlier generations seemed unavoidable, is a cause for devout gratitude. It also justifies the hope that in the future much of the suffering of the present will be rendered unnecessary by human skill and the advancement of knowledge. But this hardly warrants the conclusion that the religious attitude toward the evils of life has changed from one of submission to one of protest. In the past, it is said, "the evils of this life were believed to have been ordained of God for some mysterious purpose of discipline." Hence "the moral duty of the Christian was to submit rather than protest." To-day, however, "the presence of evil arouses our protest."[22] This statement is no doubt true insofar as it applies to the attitude of society as a whole toward certain preventable diseases. But it certainly does not express the attitude of the individual Christian who is suffering from some serious disease. He employs every remedy at his command, just as sensible Christians in all ages have done, but through it all his attitude is still one of submission, not protest. Surely, the evils of life have not lost their providential and dis-

[22]Gerald Birney Smith, *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology*, pp. 117, 120.

ciplinary significance for the Christian of to-day. Whether preventable or not, they have their meaning for religious faith and always will have.

Then, too, we need to remind ourselves that the greatest evils of life, those that are bound up most closely with religion, lie beyond human control. Ultimate physical decay and death await us all. To protest against them would be as rational as to protest against thunderstorms, cyclones, and earthquakes. These facts are, to be sure, quite unideal, but they are facts nevertheless, and the only sane and religious thing to do is to submit to them. Nothing that the modern man has discovered or invented, releases us from this duty and necessity. There is at present danger of our grossly exaggerating the spiritual significance of the scientific control of nature. When we take the long look, this control does not, after all, get us very far. The proper attitude for us to assume toward life as a whole and toward the universe remains substantially the same as with our forefathers; it is that of submission rather than protest. Still, this need not dampen our enthusiasm for the social gospel and its new conception of Christian duty and opportunity for service. Rather does the long look of submissive faith give added incentive to social endeavor.

Thus far we have considered simply one aspect or form of the social gospel, a type of it which

is gradually making its way into the church and is coming to be generally accepted. This form of the social gospel is largely practical in character, devoting itself to the righting of specific wrongs and the general improvement of material and social conditions without raising the political question connected with the economic system as a whole. As between capitalism and socialism its attitude might be said to be neutral. It stresses the things on which both agree. But there is another and more radical type of the social gospel which centers attention on the economic system as such, and takes the side of socialism against capitalism. It contends that the present capitalistic system with its free competition is unchristian; it arrays individual against individual, class against class, nation against nation. So long as it continues, it will inevitably lead to strife and war. Particular reforms here and there can at the best be only palliatives. Not until the entire system is changed and a socialistic state of society is introduced can there be peace and concord. The consistent application of the gospel, therefore, to the present economic system means a revolution. Such is the contention of the more radical representatives of the social gospel. They also hold that only such an interpretation of Christianity will succeed in winning back to the church the multitudes who have left its fold under the

influence of socialistic propaganda. Only as the church adopts their ideal of economic equality and cooperates with them in the effort to bring in a new social order, will it be possible to bridge over the chasm that now separates the church and the proletariat. The future of the church, consequently, as well as the welfare of society depends on its adoption of the socialistic standpoint.

This radical form of the social gospel, which might more exactly be called Christian socialism, serves at least one important function. It tends to pry the church loose from its present close connection with the capitalistic order. This connection is particularly close in the case of the Protestant Church, especially its Calvinistic branch.[23] "After all is said and done," says Troeltsch, "Calvinism remains the real nursing-father of the civic industrial capitalism of the middle classes. Self-devotion to work and gain, which constitutes the involuntary and unconscious ascetism of the modern man, is the child of a conscious intramundane asceticism of work and calling inspired by religious motives."[24] The relation, then, between modern Christianity and the established order is not external and accidental. It is not simply the conservative tendency in religion—its tendency to be a social cement rather

[23] See Max Weber, *Religionssoziologie,* i, pp. 17-206.
[24] *Protestantism and Progress,* pp. 135f.

than a social ferment—that leads it to indorse the existing system. There is a causal relation between them, a kinship of spirit. The capitalistic doctrine of work and struggle has its source and inspiration in the Protestant form of Christian asceticism. Hence it is only natural that the Christian churches, particularly in Protestant lands, should have a special interest in the maintenance of the present economic system, that they themselves should be largely controlled by the business and professional classes who profit most from existing conditions, that as a result they should be more or less blind to prevailing social evils, and that they should look with positive disapproval upon the effort to introduce a new social order, especially as the advocates of the latter have most of them in the past been openly hostile to religion. But natural as all this is, it involves a serious peril both to religion and to society. It tends to identify religion with the interests of the privileged classes, it tends to perpetuate grave evils in the social order, it tends to raise a barrier between the church and the toilers. Insofar, therefore, as the social gospel tends to break the strangle-hold that social and economic conservatism now has on the church by allying itself with the socialistic program, it renders an important service to the cause of religion. It lifts Christianity above the strife of economic systems and

makes it the critic of all such systems rather than the partisan of any one. It thus leaves the church free to line up with any program or movement that gives promise of promoting true social progress, and by so doing destroys the middle wall of partition between organized religion and organized labor.

But while the social gospel in its radical form is having this wholesome effect, it is itself advocating a policy that would commit the church to an alliance that might be even more perilous than the present one. Rauschenbusch, for instance, tells us that "God must join the social movement. . . . If we trust the Bible, God is against capitalism, its methods, spirit and results. The bourgeois theologians have misrepresented our revolutionary God."[25] These words have a partisan ring. They seem to aim at enlisting religion in the cause of a political and economic movement which may or may not be for the best interests of mankind. No doubt the socialistic ideal of equality has in it Christian elements, but so also has the ideal of liberty that underlies modern capitalism. The latter ideal evoked quite as much enthusiasm a little over a century ago as the former ideal does to-day. Both are one-sided, and neither is likely to be realized. Thus far the equalitarianism of socialism has been about as spiritually ineffective

[25] *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* pp. 178, 184.

as the libertarianism of capitalism. Both have produced bitterness and strife rather than the spirit of fraternity. Christianity should not, therefore, ally itself with either but be the critic of both.

This, however, is often overlooked by minds of the prophetic type. They see only the evil in the old and only the good in the new, and so become ardent advocates of the latter. Such people need to be reminded of three significant facts in connection with the social problem. The first is its enormous, yea bewildering complexity. Ludwig Stein begins his great work on *The Social Question in the Light of Philosophy* by quoting a saying of Heinrich v. Sybel to the effect that "a fruitful treatment of the social question is possible only to him who recognizes, to begin with, the insolubility of the problem." No single formula will ever enable a man to master the problem, much less to solve it. Anyone who professes to have a solution of the problem by that very fact proves his incapacity to deal with it. The social question is an ever-recurring one in human life, varying in character from age to age. Solved in one form it recurs in another. So far as our own generation is concerned, its great task is to curb unbridled individual and national freedom and create a general plan for economic cooperation among the nations of the world. But

this is manifestly something that cannot be done merely by good will or by means of religious ideas. It is, as Troeltsch says, "at once a scientific and a practical-political problem that only the highest form of technical knowledge and a transcendent type of statesmanship can solve."[26]

Christian prophets of the new social order need also to be reminded that there is no distinctive Christian social theory, that is, no social theory that springs directly out of the religious idea expressed in Christianity. Such a theory is not to be found in the teaching of Jesus. We do find there the idea of the kingdom of God. But the kingdom of God, as he conceived it, was apocalyptic and eschatological in character. It was not a social theory for intra-mundane relations, and it did not become such even later when it came to be identified with the church. There did, it is true, gradually grow up within the church a Christian social philosophy—and Christianity is the only religion that has such a philosophy—but it was not a strictly native growth. It was based on the Græco-Roman doctrine of a natural moral law. This law served the same purpose in Christian ethics that the idea of the Logos did in Christian theology. It was the connecting link between Christian and secular thought. The Christian social philosophy built up on this basis was domi-

[26] *Die Sozialphilosophie des Christentums*, p. 32.

nant during the mediæval period and is still not without considerable influence. A variant type grew up later under Calvinistic influence in lands where there was a felt need of adjusting Christian social teaching to the separation of church and state and to modern democracy and capitalism. But this type has never attained the consistency that the mediæval type did.

More recently by way of reaction against the evils of capitalism there has arisen the tendency to identify Christian social teaching with socialism. It is this tendency that is represented by the more radical advocates of the social gospel. What they are contending for has a certain justification in present conditions, and undoubtedly has some value in the way of bringing about a rapprochement between the church and the disaffected working classes. "But," as Troeltsch says, "the transformation of labor-socialism into Christian socialism and the new world redemption and erection of the kingdom of God resulting from this is a monstrous dilettante idea, in comparison with which the old Christian law of nature is a paragon of wisdom."[27] All that can be said for it is that there has always been a tendency toward social radicalism in the Christian Church. This is illustrated by the communistic experiment in the church at Jerusalem, by the

[27] *Die Sozialphilosophie des Christentums*, p. 32.

monastic movement, by the peasant revolt in Germany in the early years of the Reformation, and by the communistic theories frequently expressed by Christian theologians. Christian socialism may, therefore, justly claim that it is not an exotic in the church, not a modern innovation, no matter how unjustified its identification of Christianity with socialism may be.

A third fact that some of our social radicals might do well to take note of is that the existence of a social ideal does not necessarily guarantee the possibility of its realization under mundane conditions. "A universe," we are told, "that necessitates the permanently deficient is one that we refuse to accept. Mankind will challenge it or die rebelling against it. . . . Humanity will not be denied the realization of its passion for the ideal. As it has refused to be thwarted by the physical universe, so will it decline to be defeated by the supposedly unconquerable defects of its common nature."[28] These are brave words, and as against a rigid economic rationalism and a cynical social and political conservatism they are as wholesome as they are stirring. But if taken as the calm expression of a social theory and a social hope they have no foundation either in science or religious faith. There is no reason for believing that the social ideal will ever be realized

[28] H. F. Ward, *The New Social Order,* p. 351.

on earth. Christian ideas and forces will work powerfully in that direction, but, to quote the impressive words of Troeltsch, "as little as any other power in this our world will they create the kingdom of God on earth, as a completed social ethical organism; every idea will still be met by brutal facts, every upward development by interior and exterior checks. There exists no absolute Christian Ethic, still awaiting its first discovery; but only an overcoming of the changing situations of the world, as also the earlier Christian Ethic was not an absolute Christian Ethic, but only such an overcoming, in its way. There exists also no absolute ethical transformation of material nature or of human nature, but only a wrestling with them both. Only doctrinaire idealists or religious fanatics can fail to recognize these facts. Faith is indeed the very sinews of the battle of life, but life does in very deed remain a battle ever renewed along ever new fronts. For every threatening abyss that is closed a new one yawns before us. The old truth remains true: the Kingdom of God is within us."[29]

But in spite of the dilettantism and economic irrationalism, into which some advocates of the social gospel fall, they represent a sincere and earnest effort to apply in a thoroughgoing way

[29] *Die Soziallehren,* pp. 985 f.; quoted by Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses,* pp. 193f.

the prophetic-Christian teaching to modern social problems. Indeed, the social gospel in its essential nature is simply a specification under the prophetic moralization of religion. It seeks to save religion from its innate tendency toward a useless ceremonialism and a barren subjectivity, and make it a vital force in the social redemption of mankind. It takes the Christian ideas of service, sacrifice, and brotherhood, and urges that they be made controlling in the business and social world, putting them in the place of the pagan ideas of pleasure, power, and pride that are now dominant. The social gospel thus belongs to the field of Christian ethics. So far as Christian theology is concerned, it is to a certain degree neutral. A man might be a theological conservative and yet a social radical, or he might be a theological radical and yet a social conservative. Theology and social theory are to a considerable extent independent of each other. The social gospel has no distinctive theology of its own, but it does have certain theological implications or tendencies; so that it is proper to speak of "a theology for the social gospel" in the sense that one type of theology is more congenial to it than another. And since the social gospel is at bottom an attempt to modernize Christianity from the social point of view, its leanings will naturally be in the direction of a modern theology. In this connection it

may be noted that it was the great progressive theologians, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, who first stressed the social idea in Christianity.

There are four aspects of the social gospel that have a more or less direct bearing on theology. These are its predominant interest in the present earthly life, its democratic tendency, its ethical emphasis, and its stress on social solidarity. We might consider each of these aspects and its theological implications separately, but this would involve not a little repetition, as the different aspects mentioned sustain a close relation to each other. It will, therefore, be better to take them up together and point out the bearing of the social gospel as a whole on the main topics in theology: the doctrine of God, the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of redemption, and the doctrine of the future life. The discussion of each will necessarily be very brief.

In the conception of God the social gospel stresses his democratic character. This is a reaction against the autocratic elements in the older doctrine of God. Under a despotic government it was natural to think of God as an irresponsible despot. He was the source of all authority, and hence might do as he chose with his own creatures. He might predestinate them to everlasting life or condemn them to eternal death. The decision

lay wholly in his own hands. But such an idea is manifestly offensive to our modern democratic sense of justice. Bishop McConnell tells a story of a Jacksonian Democrat who in a public service protested against the doctrine of the divine decrees, declaring that "the people would not stand for it." In earlier times this protest would have seemed an impertinence. The people then had no rights either as against God or the theologians. But to-day the conception of popular rights is penetrating theology. Arbitrary action is condemned in God as well as in a human ruler. Some have gone so far as to object to applying the word "king" to the Deity, and have seriously proposed that instead of "the kingdom of God" we should speak of "the democracy of God" or "the commonwealth of God." But this impresses one as religious pedantry. Furthermore, kingship expresses an essential idea in the thought of God. God is not elected by the people. He rules in his own right. He is the embodiment of those absolute ideals which we do not make but find, and to which we are in duty bound to submit whether we will or no. Then, too, there are inexplicable elements in the universe, that necessarily to us have the appearance of arbitrariness, and to these also we must bow whether we like it or not. There is, therefore, in the rule of God, a note of sovereignty that transcends the democratic ideal. In

a democracy the important thing is that the ruler please the people; in the divine government the important thing is that the people please the ruler.

When we talk about democratizing the idea of God, what we usually have in mind is moralizing it, bringing out the thought of the divine responsibility. As Bowne used to say, God is the most deeply obligated Being in the universe. This is implied in the Christian conception of the divine Fatherhood, but it was overlooked by the traditional theories of the atonement. There God was thought of as an autocratic Ruler whose honor must not be offended, or as a stern Judge whose primary concern was with the strict enforcement of the principle of retributive righteousness, or as a Governor whose fundamental interest lay in the efficiency of his administration. In all of these theories there is an important truth, namely this, that there is an ethical ideal which not even God dare sacrifice in order to please men. But this truth was crudely expressed, and the fact was overlooked that the ethical ideal is incomplete without the notion of the good will and the sense of responsibility to others. Justice and mercy are not antithetical terms. In an ancient prophecy we read that Jehovah is "a just God *and* a Saviour" (Isa. 45. 21). The two ideas go together, and are combined in the thought of the

divine Fatherhood. By virtue of his paternal relation to men God is under obligation to do everything he can to save them. It is this truth that is commonly associated with what is called the democratic idea of God. Rauschenbusch, for instance, says of Jesus that "when he took God by the hand and called him 'our Father,' he democratized the idea of God. He disconnected the idea of the coercive and predatory state, and transferred it to the realm of family life, the chief social embodiment of solidarity and love. He not only saved humanity; he saved God. . . . The value of Christ's idea of the Fatherhood of God is realized only by contrast to the despotic ideas which it opposed and was meant to displace. We have classified theology as Greek and Latin, as Catholic and Protestant. It is time to classify it as despotic and democratic."[30]

There is, however, a danger of identifying God too closely with the interests of humanity. The danger lies not only in the direction of a weak and immoral sentimentalism, but also in the direction of an extreme limitation of the divine power. The latter danger appears in the current idea of a finite God. This idea is not distinctively modern. It is implied in polytheism, and has also at times been advocated by Christian thinkers. Marcion, for instance, in the second century dis-

[30] *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* p. 174f.

tinguished between the Creator-God of the Old Testament and the good God of the New Testament. The latter he conceived of as a moral power working in a world which he had not made. The current idea of a finite God, while akin to the Marcionitic teaching has, of course, no direct connection with it. It has sprung up out of the empiricistic and pluralistic tendency in modern thought, on the one hand, and out of the modern recognition of the social value of religion, on the other. John Stuart Mill was the first to proclaim the new gospel.[31] It was then taken up by William James,[32] and more recently has been popularized by H. G. Wells in his widely read book *God the Invisible King.*

Wells rejects the idea of God as Creator and as Providence, but the idea of God as Redeemer he enthusiastically advocates. "The ultimate of existence," he says, "is a Veiled Being, which seems to know nothing of life or death or good or ill." Concerning him or it we have no real knowledge. The true God, on the other hand, the Redeemer-God, is the God of our moral and mystical experience. His home is "in our hearts." He is a finite Being, and stands in an intimate and apparently dependent relation to humanity. "Somewhere," we are told, "in the dawning of

[31] *Three Essays on Religion,* pp. 242-257.
[32] *A Pluralistic Universe,* pp. 310ff.

mankind he had a beginning, an awakening, and as mankind grows he grows. With our eyes he looks out upon the universe he invades: with our hands he lays hands upon it. All our truth, all our intentions and achievements, he gathers to himself. He is the undying human memory, the increasing human will." Yet he is said to be a "person." "He is not merely the best of all of us, but a Being in himself, . . . an immortal Being arising out of man, and external to the individual man."[33] Wells' conception of God would thus seem to be a cross between theism and Comte's Religion of Humanity. If the existence of such a finite Deity were admitted, we would still need an absolute Being to explain his origin. And this absolute or Veiled Being would be the ultimate ground of religious faith, if such faith persisted. Religion as well as philosophy demands the absolute. Wells' finite deity is a nondescript being whose paternity neither philosophy nor religion would be willing to acknowledge. To him Haeckel's coarse jest about God as a "gaseous vertebrate" would properly apply. The finite God is not built into the universe in such a way as to give the impression of real existence. Rather is the idea of such a being a curio belonging in the museum of religious thought. Nevertheless, it is interesting and significant as a speculative

[33] *God the Invisible King*, pp. 14, 61, 85.

attempt to save the social passion of religion while surrendering its metaphysical basis.

In its doctrine of *sin* the social gospel emphasizes the idea of solidarity. This idea in theology is a two-edged sword. In one direction it cuts down the Pharisaic and Pelagian claim to righteousness on the part of the individual, but in the other direction it destroys the basis of individual responsibility. It is thus both a friend and foe to the Christian faith. It has been such in the past, and it is such again in the hands of the social gospel. In the traditional theology it took the form of the doctrine of original sin. This doctrine expresses the idea that sin is a super-individual reality, that it enslaves the individual, so that redemption from it is impossible through self-effort and can come only through divine grace. In this idea there is manifestly a fundamental religious truth, a truth of religious experience. Religion would be meaningless without it, or at least would be a very superficial factor in human life. But in the form in which it was often expressed in the past it seemed to deny human freedom, and hence in modern times there has been a tendency to reject it. Sin and guilt, it is pointed out, are inalienable; they cannot be detached from the individual. They cannot be transmitted from parent to child. The idea, therefore, that all men are somehow responsible

for the sin of Adam and have inherited his guilt must be regarded as a theological fiction. But while this has been the tendency in modern religious thought, the social gospel has to some extent run counter to it. It has laid stress on the social nature of sin, its superindividual character. "Sin," says Rauschenbusch, "is lodged in social customs and institutions and is absorbed by the individual from his social group."[34] This view differs from the traditional doctrine of original sin in that it makes social tradition rather than heredity the main channel through which sin is transmitted. But this is merely a difference of emphasis. The two views agree in making sin objective to the individual. There is a kingdom of sin as well as a kingdom of God. This idea was developed in a significant and fruitful way by Ritschl,[35] and undoubtedly expresses a fact of human experience, whatever ultimate explanation of it may be given.

Stress on the objective power of sin may have one or the other of two different effects. It may deepen or it may weaken the consciousness of sin. The former result occurs in the case of highly sensitive, idealistic and mystical natures. They feel themselves as individuals involved in the guilt of humanity. The fact that they dwell

[34] *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* p. 60.

[35] *Justification and Reconciliation,* pp. 334-350.

among a people of unclean lips impresses them with a sense of their own sinfulness and helplessness. But this is not the usual result of the solidaric conception of sin. To most people it affords an opportunity to unload the responsibility for their own sins upon society. This is manifestly the prevailing tendency at present. The emphasis we are placing on social environment as the determining factor in human life is making the consciousness of sin less vivid than it was. The sense of guilt is less keenly felt. Men are not so aware of the need of repentance as they once were. The sinfulness of society is an excuse for the shortcomings of the individual rather than a challenge to action; and such it is likely to remain with most people. "What is everybody's business is nobody's business." This rule applies to sin as well as to duty. That it ought not to be so may be freely conceded, but that it is so can hardly be questioned. Emphasis on social solidarity has weakened the popular consciousness of sin, and the current doctrine of economic determinism has well nigh destroyed it in wide circles. It is therefore an urgent religious need that the one-sidedness of the social gospel and of present social teaching be corrected at this point, and that the individual be reinstated in his central place in the moral life. For without the depth, the inwardness, and intensity of an

acute sense of individual responsibility there can be no high development of religion.

The doctrine of *redemption* is so closely related to the doctrine of sin that here, too, we find the social gospel emphasizing the idea of solidarity, though it also stresses the ethical character of redemption. Redemption, as it is conceived by the social gospel, has three distinct aspects. It means the redemption of society as well as that of the individual; it means that the individual cannot be fully redeemed apart from the redemption of society; and it means that true redemption is ethical, not mystical, in nature. The last conception is not distinctive of the social gospel. It is a common modern idea, and is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Ritschlian theology. The only difference between the Ritschlian standpoint and that of the social gospel is that the latter is inclined to interpret the word "ethical" in an exclusively "social" sense, thus depriving it to some extent of its inwardness and depth of meaning. But both agree in their antipathy to mysticism and in their conception of religion as primarily a matter of will and conduct. "Salvation," says Rauschenbusch, "is the voluntary socializing of the soul."[36] The way to God is not above humanity but through it. This, in general, may be accepted as sound doctrine, but a one-

[36] *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* p. 99.

sided stress upon it tends to destroy the warmth and immediacy of religious experience. Mysticism as well as humanitarianism has its place in religion.

More distinctive of the social gospel is its conception of redemption as applicable to society as well as to the individual. There are great superpersonal forces in human society that need to be destroyed. There is the titanic selfishness embodied in militarism, in imperialism, and in capitalism. There are numerous evil customs to which men are enslaved and great social and economic inequalities that have arisen without adequate justification. In the past the tendency was to accept these evils as unavoidable and even as ordained of God. In one of the church-hymns we have this stanza:

> "The rich man in his castle,
> The poor man at his gate,
> God made them high or lowly
> And ordered their estate."

But the present mood is very different. Men do not now look upon the inequalities and evils of the existing social order as an external fate to which they must submit. They regard society as plastic. And to this altered mood the church has responded with its doctrine of the redemption of society. Society as well as the individual can

be saved from its sins, regenerated, and made anew. To this task, therefore, the exigencies of the present situation demand that the church devote itself with all the powers at its command. The conversion of individuals here and there will not suffice. Society itself must be converted, inwardly and outwardly transformed, so that it may be a fit home for the children of God. Nothing short of this will satisfy either the secular or the religious mood of our day. A purely individualistic gospel belongs to the past.

It is, furthermore, an implication of the idea of solidarity that the redemption of the individual is dependent upon that of society. "If there cannot be an isolated personality," says A. C. McGiffert, "or an isolated character, there cannot be isolated salvation. Nobody can be saved *from* society, he must be saved *with* it. . . . To be saved in the full sense of the word means to be part of a saved race. . . . Apart from such a Christianized society there is no real and abiding salvation for any man."[37] To this position there need be no objection from the Christian standpoint, provided the freedom of the individual and his independence of external conditions are adequately protected. But at present the tendency is to put so much stress upon social environment that the individual is threatened with a new spiritual bond-

[37] *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas,* pp. 277f.

age. If men are so bound to the social organism that their only hope lies in the transformation of the existing social order, then is there scant ground for the belief in the possibility of their redemption. If this is all that the social gospel has to offer to the toiling millions, its message of hope will in the end prove a mockery. It is not in the promised transformation of outward conditions that the gospel message is to be found. Such a message may have a certain religious value under existing circumstances. But "it must be remembered," as Harnack says, "that the chief task of the church is still the preaching of the gospel, that is to say, the message of redemption and of eternal life. Christianity as a religion would be at an end if this truth were obscured, and the gospel were to be changed into a social manifesto, whether for the sake of gaining popularity, or owing to excessive zeal for reform. More than that; none dare ultimately expect more *for himself* from the message of the church than a firm, consolatory faith, able to triumph over all the troubles of life."[38] It is here that we have the heart of the gospel.

To the natural man it must seem that Jesus was guilty of an anti-climax when in his message to the Baptist after recounting the fact that "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the

[38] *The Social Gospel*, p. 72.

lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised," he ended by saying that "the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11. 5-6). What could be more worthless to the poor than the preaching of the gospel? What they manifestly need is material and physical help. Yet Jesus apparently cited his preaching of the gospel to them as the most important of his Messianic credentials. In so doing what he meant to say was that, while the relief of suffering is important, more important is the inner power to triumph over the world. This power he declares is now, for the first time in human history, within the reach of the humblest classes. To them all life in spite of their hard lot may have a meaning and a value. That is the true gospel. As distinguished from it the promise of a better social order no doubt serves also as a spiritual inspiration to men, but the promise is one that has never been realized in the way or to the extent expected. For men, therefore, to invest all their hopes in the improvement of social conditions is to court disappointment and despair. Far more important is it that the conviction be created within them that no matter how untoward circumstances may be, life for no one need be a failure. Victory over the world is possible to all through faith. To most men in our materialistic age this no doubt seems a vain dream, but even

from their realistic standpoint it is less so than the utopia of socialism.

The point at which the social gospel diverges most sharply from the traditional theology is in its attitude toward the belief in the future life. It does not reject this belief, but it makes nothing of it. It is practically indifferent to it. Its own interests center in this world. In taking this attitude the social gospel, it seems to me, makes an undue concession to positivism and to social radicalism. Positivism rules out the metaphysical altogether and leaves no place for a substantial soul. With this widespread theory we dealt briefly in the first lecture. Social radicalism sees in the belief in immortality simply a device of the ruling classes for keeping the oppressed masses in subjection. Against it, consequently, the bitterest scorn is vented. Even a socialist like Upton Sinclair, who professes to be an enthusiastic disciple of Jesus, says, "If you can get a man to believing in immortality, there is no more left for you to desire: you can take everything he owns—you can skin him alive if it pleases you—and he will bear it with perfect good humor."[39] He then adds that the man who "got up" the idea of immortality was a "world-genius." In harmony with this is the tone and temper of the radical

[39] *The Profits of Religion,* pp. 219f.

propaganda in general. One of the "I. W. W. Songs" has as its chorus these lines:

> "You will eat, by and by,
> In that glorious land above the sky;
> Work and pray, live on hay,
> You'll get pie in the sky when you die."

This scoffing attitude toward the belief in a future life on the part of social radicals no doubt has some justification. The belief does lend itself to an anti-social use, and such use has been made of it in the past. It is, of course, also a source of inspiration to social activity, but this is not so evident to the average mind, and even the religious mind often fails to draw the proper social inference from the belief. The result is that a sense of discord between the impulse to social activity and the belief in immortality has sprung up in the modern world, and the tendency is to encourage the former at the expense of the latter. This tendency is reflected in the negative or at least passive attitude of the social gospel toward the Christian hope.

But this position from the religious point of view is superficial and shortsighted. The religious spirit cannot be "cribbed and cabined" within the limits of humanity's earthly existence. By virtue of an inner necessity it reaches out toward the eternal and absolute; and from this

standpoint a positivistic world, a merely earthly drama, has neither worth nor meaning. This truth has been expressed in words of "poignant beauty" by A. J. Balfour. "We survey," he says, "the past and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigations, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thought will perish. The uneasy consciousness, which in this obscure corner has for a brief time broken the contented silence of the universe, will be at rest. Matter will know itself no longer. Imperishable monuments and immortal deeds, death itself, and love stronger than death, will be as though they had not been. Nor will anything that remains be better or be worse for all that the labor, genius, devotion, and suffering of man have striven through countless generations to effect."[40]

From such an outcome to the universe as this the human spirit instinctively recoils, and seeks

[40] *Essays and Addresses,* p. 308.

its comfort and its strength in the Christian hope. Nothing short of this hope will satisfy the deepest needs of the human soul; and between it and the social hope there need be no conflict. Rather do they, when properly understood, support each other. The thought of the hereafter needs to be moralized, and the social hope needs to be rationalized and Christianized. We need, as H. F. Ward says, "to tie the social program up to the eternities and fill it with the power of an endless life."[41] When this is done, it will be seen that Christianity instead of being the foe of progress is its only sure guarantee, and that the only abiding spring of social activity is to be found in the Christian hope. "The Christian Ethos," says Troeltsch toward the close of his monumental work on "The Social Doctrines of the Christian Churches and Groups," "alone places a goal before the eyes of us all who have to live and struggle through our difficult social existence—a goal which lies beyond all the relativities of the earthly life, and compared with which everything else represents only approximate values. The conviction of the Divine Kingdom of the future, which is but faith in the final realization of the Absolute, in whatever way we may conceive this realization, does not, as short-sighted opponents maintain, deprive the world, and the life in the

[41] *Social Evangelism*, p. 24.

world of their value; but it makes the soul strong, throughout its various stages of progression, in the certainty of a last absolute meaning and aim for human toil. It thus raises the soul above the world without denying it. Only through this, the deepest insight of all Christian asceticism, . . . do all social utopias become superfluous; and the impossibility, always preached anew by experience, of a full understanding and a full execution of the ideal, need not then throw back the seeker into that skepticism which so easily springs from an earnest veracity; and which is everywhere invading the finer spirits of our times. The Beyond is, in very truth, the power of our Now and Here."[42]

This concludes our survey of the main tendencies in modern religious thought. The basal problem with which we have dealt is the one as to whether Christianity will be able to maintain its verity in the modern scientific world. This is the crucial question of our day. A definitive answer to it is impossible. But such answers as have been given by Christian thinkers afford good ground for encouragement to the religious believer. The unscientific idea of an absolute external authority has been relinquished, but no serious loss seems as a result to have befallen

[42]Pp. 478f.; quoted by von Hügel, *ibid.*, pp. 191f.

Christianity. Summoned before the bar of experience, of reason and of utility, the Christian religion has in each case been able to give a good acount of itself; and it has done so without bowing the knee to any foreign master. It has asserted its own independence and yet has won the intellectual respect of fair-minded men in general. There is a type of experience, a type of reason, and a type of utility, each of which would leave no place for religion. But religion has successfully contended that they are all imperfect and undeveloped types. There is such a thing as a super-empirical experience, a super-rational reason, and a super-utilitarian utility, all of which are realized in religion.

It is this fact that accounts for the persistence of religion in the modern world and that so baffles the unbeliever. A recent writer in the Rationalist Press Association annual thus expresses the difficulty in which he finds himself. "The gospel miracles," he says, "are the veriest trifles compared with the authentic, undeniable miracle of Christianity's mere existence. . . . Subjected to a bombardment of unexampled violence from every point of the material and moral universe, it shows never a sign of surrender. . . . Blown sky-high to-day, it presents an unbroken and smiling surface to-morrow. . . . No other religion, be it remembered, is subjected to anything like

the same ordeal. . . . It is the survival of Christianity in the realistic atmosphere of the West that is such an amazing and impressive phenomenon. Defenses it has none; its last bastions were pulverized at least a generation ago. But still it rears its head, serene, arrogant, undismayed. . . . It is just here that we find ourselves face to face with the miracle. Discredited beyond expression—historically, intellectually, morally bankrupt—Christianity is nevertheless as prosperous to all appearances as ever it was."[43] In the face of this fact it would seem necessary to conclude either that man is a hopelessly irrational being or that there are depths to reason which the rationalist has not fathomed. The latter conclusion is the one to which post-Kantian thought has been steadily moving, and in the light of it Christianity need have no fear as it contemplates the future.

[43]Quoted by A. C. Bouquet, *Is Christianity the Final Religion?* pp. 7f.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE author desires to express his appreciation of the favors extended to him by various publishers from whose publications he has made brief quotations in the present work. In return for the privilege to reprint he is pleased to give deserved credit to these respective volumes by indicating the name of the book, author, and publisher in the following list, and also to record the number of the page in this volume on which each particular excerpt appears. It will be found in addition that in nearly every case in the text a footnote credit indicates the page on which the quoted sentence or paragraph is located in the work from which the selection is made.

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